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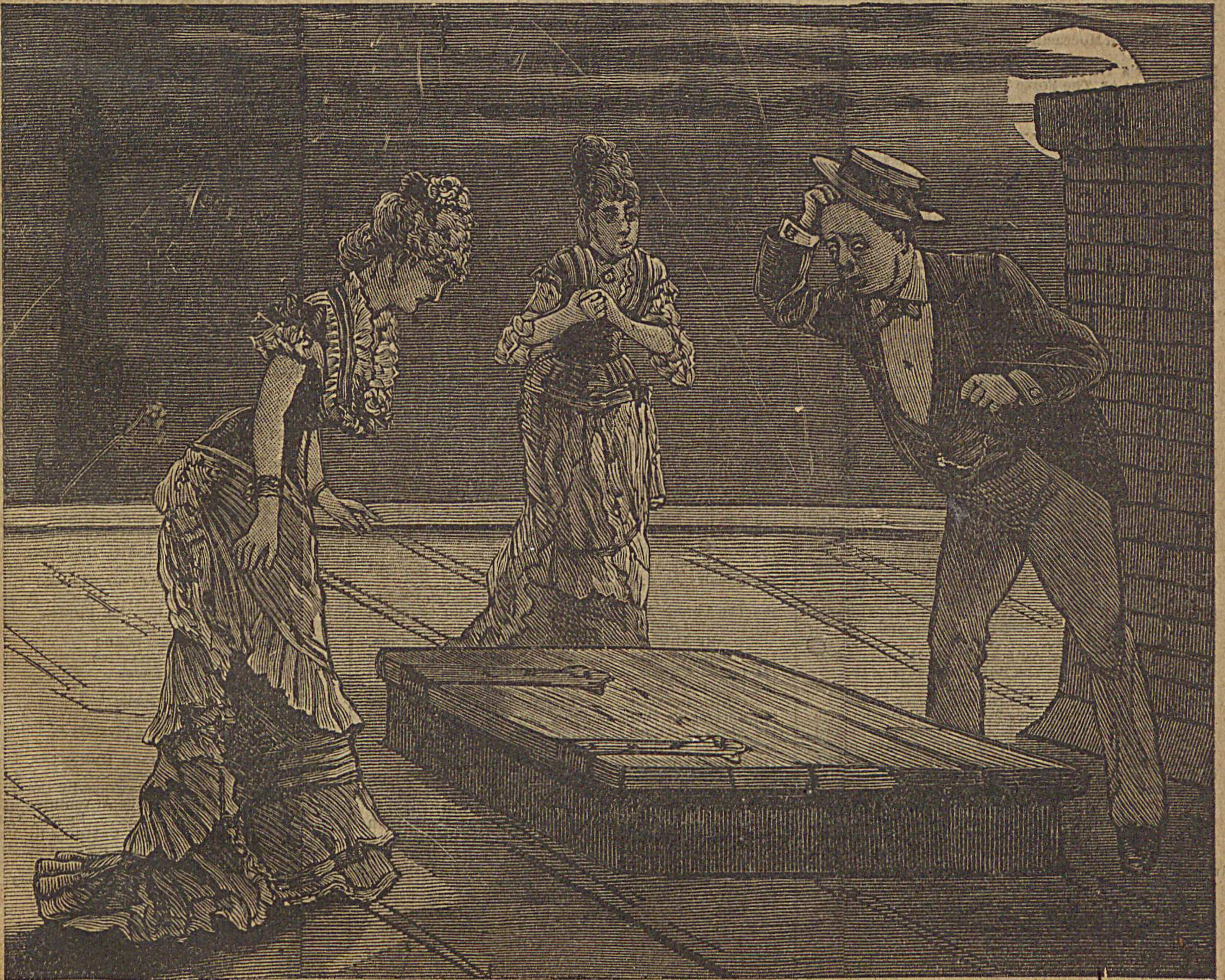
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Vol. I

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OUR LANDLORD: Or, LIFE IN FRENCH FLATS. By PETER PAD.



He started to escort the ladies down-stairs, when, lo! there was no escape but by jumping to the ground. "Oh! my prophetic soul! my mother-in-law!" breathed Mr. Jumper, aghast at the situation.

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By BRICKTOP

OUR LANDLORD;

OR,

LIFE IN FRENCH FLATS.

By PETER PAD,

Author of "Boarding-School; or, Sam Bowser at Work and Play," "Henpecked," "Bulger Boom, the Inventor," "Sam; or, The Troublesome Foundling," "The Funny Four," "Joe Junk, the Whaler; or, Anywhere For Fun," etc., etc.

CHAPTER I.

THE probability is that the majority of us possess that domestic luxury in some form or other, known as a landlord, and not a few of us live in modern contrivances presided over by these personages, known as French Flats.

But we do not all possess such a landlord as Skidmore Jumper was, and if you don't believe it, I will just give you an introduction, and then call your attention to his peculiarities.

Mr. Jumper was about fifty years of age, a tall, good-looking man, rather too corpulent, if anything, and possessed of a very queer, indecisive disposition.

He had by some means or other got acquainted with a young lady of about his own circumstances in life, although at least twenty years younger, and taking a great liking to her, he had courted her most assiduously for five years without coming to that point which all loving maidens like to arrive at in the shortest possible time, namely, the proposition of marriage.

Mr. Skidmore Jumper was exceedingly bashful in the presence of women, but when dealing with men he was as sharp and smart as any of them.

The young lady whom he was courting for this length of time bore the name of Sarah Scratcher, and, urged to the point by her mother, she said to him one night:

"Mr. Jumper, this is probably the last time you will see me."

The bashful bachelor nearly leaped out of his boots.

"What is that you say, Sarah?"

"I am going away."

"Why, Sarah, where to?" he asked, in alarm.

"I am going to New York to get married."

"Oh, Sarah! Don't say that," and he actually whined.

"Do you suppose I am going to stay here all my life, and never get married? I guess not."

"But, Sarah—"

"Well?"

She waited anxiously to hear what he had to say.

"I—I—I say, Sarah, it will be awfully lonesome after you go away."

"Lonesome! Why?"

"Why, you—you know that I've been coming to see you for such a long time—I—"

"I know it; but what does that amount to?"

"Why, I—I—it'll be awful lonesome, Sarah."

"Well, it won't be lonesome for me much longer, for the first good offer I get I shall accept."

"But I say, Sarah—"

"Well?"

"You—you don't know how lonesome I shall be when you go away. Here I've been coming to see you for five years every Sunday night, and—"

"And you will miss the place to hang your hat? Well, that is a little rough, I suppose," said she, sarcastically.

"But don't go, Sarah!"

"What shall I stay here for?"

"Well, you know I shall miss you so; it will be so lonesome, Sarah!"

"Nonsense! you don't care anything for me."

"Oh, Sarah! don't I though?" he exclaimed.

"Well, do you mean business?"

"Oh, Sarah!"

"Now, look here, Skidmore Jumper, if you want to marry me, why don't you say so, and I'm ready."

Skidmore caught her in his arms.

"Well, now, Sarah, you begin to talk business! Why didn't you say that four years ago? I'd have married you—been wanting to all this time, but didn't know as you would have me."

And that is how Mr. Skidmore Jumper hap-

pened to get married. He would probably have continued to court her until one or the other of them died, if she had not become restless and taken the initiative.

This is a tolerable idea of the person whom we shall hereafter know as our landlord, although I might touch up the picture by way of saying that he had a bald head, a red, good-natured face, was fat, and rather stylish in his dress.

As may be inferred from the manner in which his courtship terminated, Mrs. Jumper was rather a leader than otherwise in the matrimonial team, but if she lacked anything of the qualities of a leader, her mother was ever at hand to go to the front for her, for she was an ideal mother-in-law.

After being married about fifteen years, Mr. Jumper inherited quite a fortune from an uncle who had got through with it, and he came to New York for the purpose of taking possession of it, accompanied, of course, by his wife and mother-in-law.

The real estate portion of this windfall consisted of a large, elegant brownstone tenement house on one of the fashionable avenues. I call it "tenement house," although it was dignified by the name of French flats, and people of great style and pretensions resided in these apartments who would have scorned the idea of living in a "tenement house."

That is the way fashion dignifies things.

Well, the will of the uncle from whom Jumper inherited this valuable piece of property requested him to reside in it himself and take personal care of it, as he had done before him, and so arrangements were at once made for doing so.

In the course of a month the new landlord moved into the building, and began, assisted by his mother-in-law, to make the acquaintance of the tenants and to collect the back rent.

But the moment Mrs. Jumper settled down in

the city, and in such a fashionable locality, she thought it incumbent upon her to cast aside her dresses and the like which had heretofore been good enough for her, and to become a fashionable woman.

And this is how things stood at the opening of our story, our strange and o'er true tale.

But it was entirely new business to Mr. Jumper, and he did not feel wholly at ease, especially as several of his tenants, or at least their representatives, were females.

The mother-in-law, however, came to the front, as was her wont, and whenever there was a void to fill, she filled it, more especially if there was a female to deal with, although, be it said, greatly to the discomfort of Jumper, who, since his marriage, had become more bold, and thought he could manage his own affairs, even if it did entail a female or two.

Well, his wife was by this time wholly given over to fashion and dress, and took but little interest in anything else, leaving him (and his mother-in-law, of course) to manage the building. But in proportion as fortune smiled upon him, he began to regard himself as one of the solid men of New York, although anything which varied in the least from the strictly proper in all things never entered his mind.

But being now tolerably well acquainted with our landlord and his family as they appear in a "still picture," let us take a peep at some of the people living in his house.

Mr. Jumper occupied the ground floor himself, and the second one was occupied by a family who had lived there three or four years, bearing the name of Queeryman. The male head of this family always managed to pay his rent, but how he did it, or what his business was, no one appeared to know.

On the third floor resided a divinity rejoicing in the name of Miss Vestvalia, an actress of some renown on three-sheet posters, and of great importance in her own estimation; one of those mysterious creatures who must be in receipt of a tremendous salary in order to keep up the style which she regarded as only barely good enough for her.

The fourth floor was occupied by Mrs. Cutter, a showy widow lady, who did dressmaking and millinery work for a few select customers, employing four or five young ladies who might easily be mistaken for heiresses when seen upon the street, so "toney" and stylish were they. But Mrs. Cutter always paid her rent punctually.

The fifth floor was next to the roof, which was fortunate in some respects, for it was occupied by a Professor Grimshaw, a man given over, soul and body, to experiments in all sorts of things, and he bore the marks and scars of his wrestlings with science, in the shape of the absence or two or three fingers, all sorts of marks and burns, and the entire absence of hair on his head and eyebrows, owing to some wonderful discovery of his which was to rejuvenate bald heads, and which he had applied to himself first in order to be the first living example of his great discovery. He had one friend, however, if no more, for his wife fondly believed in him, and openly pronounced him one of the greatest men of the age.

But to return to our landlord.

Ever since his marriage he had been troubled more or less with attacks of mother-in-law, but after he moved to the city and became a solid man, both his wife and her mother appeared to feel it incumbent upon them to make it as lively for him as possible.

But Jumper was a good-natured man as a general thing, and took his curtain lectures and daily doses of mother-in-law with becoming resignation, always seemingly anxious to avoid anything like a family "circus."

There came a time, however, when he got up sufficient courage to talk back, but this, instead of making matters better, only made them worse; and what was still more annoying, his mother-in-law was forever harping about the tenants in the building, or coming into personal contact with them, all the while making it decidedly lively for Mr. Jumper.

"I tell you, Skidmore Jumper, that those people on the fourth floor are not what they

ought to be," said she, one day, at the dinner-table.

"And those girls of hers," sneered his wife.

"Why, what on earth is the matter with them now?" asked Jumper.

"Oh, of course you cannot see anything wrong in them because they are women. You are so very chivalrous. Pity you couldn't show some of it to your wife."

"I think so, too," suggested her mother.

"Now, for goodness sake, what is the matter? what have I done now?"

"Why do you stick up for those women?" his wife almost screamed.

"Because I know nothing against them, and Mrs. Cutter always pays her rent promptly."

"Mercenary wretch. You think of nothing but money," sneered Mrs. Jumper.

"Ah! don't you be so certain about that. He has an eye for women of that class," said her mother.

"Oh, I can well believe it."

"Ladies, will you be kind enough to allow me to eat my dinner in peace?"

"Of course, the subject is distasteful to you, but I warn you."

"So do I," added the mother-in-law.

"What about?"

"Those women on the fourth floor."

"Nonsense," said he, disgustedly.

"And that actress on the third floor. Don't attempt to fool me, Skidmore Jumper, for that cannot be done. I saw you lift your hat and bow so exceedingly polite to her the other day when you met her in the hall."

"Well, what of it?"

"What of it! Why I should say it did not look very well in a married man. I never knew of your lifting your hat to me."

"Oh, bah!" was his only answer.

"Don't you bah me, sir."

"I'll—I'll bah the pair of you. The idea of your telling me what I must or must not do. I am the owner of this house, and my tenants please me in every particular, so don't either of you attempt to dictate either to me or to them," said he, manifesting unusual energy.

"Oh, of course! go on and break my heart," exclaimed his wife, getting up and going from the table.

"Well, never mind, he can't break mine," said his fond mother-in-law.

"No, it would take a kicking mule to do that," replied Jumper.

"Arn't you ashamed of yourself?"

"Madame, will you be kind enough to shut up and allow me to eat my dinner in peace?"

"No, I won't. A man with so many faults as you have should have them told to him. Now—"

"Oh, go to blazes!" exclaimed Jumper, leaping up from his half-finished meal and going from the room and from the house.

That was a victory for the mother-in-law, and she chuckled over it. But Jumper did not come home that night, and that, of course, made more trouble. His wife was certain that he intended to leave her forever, while her mother puckered her mouth and thought how she would give him a piece of her mind the next time she saw him, just as though that would have been a novelty to him.

But he made his appearance the next day, for he had business to attend to, having engaged a painter to paint the front of his building.

It was fully noon, however, before either his wife or his mother-in-law caught sight of him, and then he was talking with the painter who was at work upon a swing staging opposite to the front room windows on their floor.

"Oh! won't I fix him when I get a chance?" mused the mother-in-law, while Mrs. Jumper was in bed, resolving to insist upon it that she was on the point of death on account of his cruelty.

A few moments afterwards he went into his kitchen for something, and there she tackled him.

"Now don't you think you are a nice man—a nice husband? Where were you last night?"

"In Heaven," he blurted out.

"Indeed!"

"Yes, for I was where I escaped your tongue."

"Oh, you wretch! I—"

Jumper didn't wait to hear the remainder of her little speech, but skipped out of the room.

Going into the parlor he slammed and locked the door behind him, knowing, however, that she could obtain admittance in another way, although it would require her a little while to do so, and he might escape as he entered after she had left the door.

The painter had gone to dinner, leaving his working clothes and tools upon the staging in front of the open parlor window.

A happy thought,

Catching up the working clothes, he was soon inside of them and out upon the staging, paint-brush in hand, and daubing away, when his mother-in-law entered the room from a door leading from the kitchen.

As she entered she gave a whoop of vengeance.

"Ah! you thought to escape me, didn't you, and the punishment of your—"

Here she stopped and looked carefully around the room. She tried the door leading into the hall, but found it locked. Where was he?

He was painting away and whistling just as though he was happy. She failed to recognize him as her son-in-law, though.

"Did you see Mr. Jumper enter this room?" she demanded, approaching the "painter."

"No, mum."

"Don't attempt to deceive me, sir. I saw him enter this room myself," said she, shaking her index finger at him.

"All right, I didn't," calmly replied Jumper, slapping some paint from his brush as if by accident, and spattering the old darling nicely.

"You miserable wretch, you have ruined my dress!" she screamed.

"Can't help it. Get out of the way then."

"Ah! now I am sure you know where that miserable Jumper is. He probably got out of this window, and escaped into the garden, and told you not to tell me which way he went, and you are just bad enough to take sides with him in his career of evil, just because he pays you a few miserable dollars."

Jumper continued to daub and whistle.

"Don't you dare tell me that I lie!" she added, although the poor man had not spoken a word. "Don't you dare do it, or I will send for an officer and have you arrested for spoiling my dress."

Still Jumper whistled and daubed.

"Oh, if I could only catch that Jumper now while my mind is charged, I'd free it in such a way that it would make him tremble," said she, going from the room.

Jumper looked in at the window.

"Has the old hippopotamus gone? Yes," and he threw off the painter's working-clothes, after which he quietly walked out of the front door and sauntered up the street.

He slept at a hotel that night, and both mother-in-law and wife began to get frightened, as he knew they would. So when he appeared the next day to look after the painters, his wife tearfully begged to be forgiven, and his beloved mamma-in-law solemnly announced it as her determination to allow him to go to the dogs just as fast as he wanted to; she had resolved on not attempting to stay his downward career any longer.

This resolution, however, she came to just as often as Jumper carried his point in anything, although she was sure to get bravely over it in a day or two, and commence again the exercise of her saving grace upon him.

The peace and quiet which reigned in our landlord's house for the next few days was most startlingly broken by an explosion on the top floor, occupied by Professor Grimshaw; an explosion that shook the whole building, blew out several squares of window-glass, and effectually frightened everybody.

Jumper leaped into the elevator and told the boy in charge of it to shoot him up to the top floor as quickly as possible.

"That confounded fool has been trying some more of his experiments, I guess. He must leave my house," he muttered.

On reaching the top floor he met Mrs. Grim-

shaw, white with terror and badly dishevelled. She was crying and wringing her hands.

"Oh, do, Mr. Jumper, for Heaven's sake, go in and see if the professor is still alive!"

"What is the matter?"

"Oh, he was trying a wonderful chemical experiment, and something gave way, or burst, or exploded. Do hurry up!"

"I'll hurry up and hurry him out of my house," growled Jumper, as he proceeded into a small room, at the rear of which Grimshaw styled his laboratory and the workshop of genius.

There was Grimshaw trying to extricate himself from beneath a table, one or two chairs, and any number of broken bottles and chemical contrivances his face cut, besooted, and wearing an expression of surprise.

"What the dickens is the matter here?" roughly demanded Jumper, assisting the professor to his feet.

"Don't speak cross to him, Mr. Jumper, please don't," pleaded the wife, who had followed him in. "Are you hurt, my dear Benjamin?"

"Oh, no, I guess not, but it was rather sudden," grunted Grimshaw, attempting to smile.

"What were you doing?"

"Well, Mr. Jumper, I was trying a wonderful experiment which you cannot understand, not being up in technical chemical terms."

"You don't appear to have understood it very well yourself," said Jumper.

"Ah! on the contrary I understood it perfectly, but I was attempting an improvement upon one of Sir Humphrey Davy's experiments, and must have got in a few drops too much of carbolic acid."

"Diabolic acid, more like."

"Not at all, Mr. Jumper, not at all. There is no such acid known to chemistry. But if you think I don't understand my profession, I will perform the experiment again in your presence."

"No, I'll be hanged if you do, or try it in my house again. Look at the broken glass."

"Very well, but I'll cheerfully pay for whatever is broken in the cause of science."

"Oh, science be hanged! I want you either to stop these dangerous explosions or leave the house."

"Why, Mr. Jumper!" whined Mrs. Grimshaw, placing her hand on his arm.

"Don't say a word, Rosetta. He has no soul for science."

"Please don't drive us away!"

"I won't, but I'll be hanged if I will have any more of this nonsense here."

"But he is now about entering upon some experiments with electricity for lighting houses."

"Well, if there's no explosion about it, I don't care; but remember, another such a break up and out you go," said Jumper, turning away.

The persuasive tones of a woman had conquered him again, and the Grimshaws remained, although it cost them several dollars for repairs.

As Mr. Jumper walked down the stairs, not calling the elevator because he wished to reassure any of his tenants who might wish it, he met Mrs. Cutter.

"Oh, what has happened, Mr. Jumper?" she asked.

Jumper explained, and assured her that nothing of the kind would happen again.

Then she said how thankful she was that it was nothing worse, and two or three of her young ladies said the same thing, and cast approving glances at Jumper. In fact, the poor man was bewildered over the optical and vocal expressions which met him on so many sides on this particular floor.

Then he balanced down to the next floor, where he was met by Miss Vestvalia, the actress. She was also in a melting mood, and when Jumper appeared, she flung herself into his arms and hysterically asked how many lives had been lost.

Jumper explained the matter as well as his nerves would allow him to do under the circumstances, and tried to assure the great actress

that there was no danger, and that the thing would never occur again.

"Oh, I am so thankful!" said she, rolling her large, lustrous eyes at Jumper. "Excuse my emotion, for this has so dreadfully upset me," said she, in one of her most effective dramatic poses.

"Oh, certainly. Don't mention it. I——"

"Mr. Jumper, you are a good man. I feel that you are, and under your care I shall feel safe. All's well that ends well, thank Heaven!" and she actually startled the landlord with her dramatic vehemence as she slowly withdrew herself from his supporting arms.

"Yes, much obliged," said Jumper, in his confusion, not knowing what else to say.

"Be careful of us, Mr. Jumper!"

"Oh, certainly, always," said he, starting for the floor below.

But there was nobody to question him on the second floor, and so he kept on down to his own flat, where he met his mother-in-law standing at the foot of the stairs, looking the war paint she evidently had on.

Scarcely noticing it, he began to explain to her the cause of the explosion, when she stopped him as short as Christmas pie crust.

"Well, sir, because there was a trifling excitement on the top floor, is that any reason why you should hold a lengthy conversation with that dressmaker on the floor below?" she asked, vinegarly.

"Why, I had to explain the matter," said he.

"Oh, of course, and when you reached the floor occupied by that wretched woman—that play actor, you had to take her in your arms and explain the matter to her, eh?"

"Well, I couldn't help it. She was greatly agitated, and what was I to do?"

"What was you to do, Skidmore Jumper! You should have stood upon your dignity, and reminded her of the fact of your being a married man," said she, fiercely.

"And that I had a mother-in-law."

"Yes, a woman of honesty, truth, and experience, who is to guide you because you are too susceptible to guide yourself."

"Oh, go to blazes! If you commence on me again I'll get out until you are sick," said he.

"Very well, if you will persist in going to eternal rack and ruin; of disgracing your wife and mother-in-law, go ahead. From this moment I will never attempt to warn you further," said she, and she seemed to be hunting around in the corner of her eye for a tear to heighten the effect.

"You mind your own business and I'll mind mine."

"But my daughter?"

"I can take care of her."

"Oh, you awful man. Didn't I see you?"

"Well, you won't be here to see me again if you don't mind your own business," said he, savagely.

"That's right! Go on—break my heart!"

"I don't think a quartz crusher could do that."

"Oh—oh—oh!" she moaned, and retired.

Another triumph for Jumper!

But the worst of it was that these triumphs only lasted a short time before he had to grapple again and win another one.

The next trouble which Jumper had was with the second floor, occupied by Mr. Queeryman and family. Nearly every day there were from three to ten callers for him, all of which occasioned a great deal of trouble for the hall-boy, and made more noise than was absolutely necessary.

But to all inquiries Mrs. Queeryman had but one answer:

"Mr. Queeryman is not at home—I don't know where he is."

These persistent callers were various and assorted creditors of the aforesaid Queeryman, but they could never catch him in.

But finally they began to draw their nets a bit closer, and whenever they saw him enter the house, they would keep close watch upon it, in order to catch him when he left it. Mr. Q. was, indeed, a curious man. He appeared to be haunted continually by the shadows or the substances of creditors, and he would flit like a

ghost from point to point, until by one strategic move he would reach his French flat.

Those who had been watching for him closely would ring the bell and inquire for him, until at last it became such a nuisance that Mr. Jumper took occasion to look into the matter.

He kept watch one or two mornings when he found his front stoop covered with the man's creditors, roosting there like so many crows, and it became a mystery how Queeryman eluded them.

But keeping close watch one day, he discovered that he and the janitor seemed to be on very friendly terms, and that he took him down in the baggage elevator every morning and steered him out at an opening in the back-yard fence, which led him into a yard of a house upon the next street, and it was this way by which he eluded his creditors.

Mr. Jumper conceived of an idea.

CHAPTER II.

Our landlord, Mr. Skidmore Jumper, made up his mind that he would put a stop to the cloud of creditors who were hanging about the house, and waiting on the front stoop for Mr. Queeryman. So he told about half of them where to wait in order to catch him as he left the house, *via* the baggage elevator—through the convenience of the janitor—and a sliding board in the back yard fence, which allowed him to make his exit upon another street.

The result was that the slippery creditor was caught and forced into making more promises than he could fulfil, and so he was obliged to change his residence once more, a thing he had probably done dozens of times before, he being one of those men who only made it a point to pay their rent, and adjust almost all other obligations to a convenient sliding scale of promises.

A flat to let in such an eligible locality produced a decided sensation among that large proportion of the female community, who can no more pass by a house or a flat that has "to let" displayed, than they could exist and not manifest any interest in a wedding or a funeral.

We have all seen those females, who, although they do not want to hire a floor or a house, or even know of anybody who does, yet will inspect it if possible, with as much satisfaction as though pursuing their legitimate business. And there are numbers of those who live in dirty, cheap apartments, who will not hesitate to inspect and price a flat that rents for one hundred and fifty dollars a month, or a house worth twice that sum, if they see a bill up.

Well, this is a new experience to Mr. Jumper, and in less than a week he got all he wanted of it, and at the end of that time he turned the business over to his mother-in-law.

But it was perfectly congenial to her. In fact, she was delighted, and, indulging in a little sarcasm, regarding the stupidity of some people, she boasted that she would have the flat rented to people above suspicion in less than two days.

So, bright and early the next morning, she dressed herself in her smartest, and stood ready to attend to the first change-of-base seeker.

She only had to wait a few minutes before there was a caller, in the person of an Irish woman and her daughter, the latter being quite fashionably attired, the former a little off color, and with brogue enough to paralyze a pig.

"Is der boss widin?" asked the old lady.

"Yes; what is it you wish?" demanded Mrs. Scratcher.

"Der flure, sure."

The old lady took a good look at them.

"Oh, it's all right; ma isn't dressed up very scrumptious just now, but she's solid," said the daughter, with a toss of her head.

"Hould yer tongue, Mary Ann. I guess yer old mother's as good as the loikes av her ony day!" sputtered the old lady, wagging her head, with her arms akimbo.

"You are not the style of tenants we wish," said Mrs. Scratcher, making a movement to close the door and the conference.

"Fhat's that ye soy?" quickly exclaimed the

Irish woman, springing towards her with a big pair of clenched fists.

Mrs. Scratcher, however, closed the door and left her customers out upon the stoop.

"Whoop! come out here an' give a lady ther satisfaction she desarves!" cried the old woman. "Come out an' show yer colors! Ha! yer darn't do it?"

"Hold on, mother."

"Ter fhat? Fhat will I hold on ter, Mary Ann?"

"Your tongue."

"Is that ther way ye spake ter yer ould mother? Is that ther way yer giver ther back cap when she is in trouble, Mary Ann?"

"What trouble are you in, mother?"

"I've been insulted."

"Nonsense! You are too recent, mother."

"Fhat's that you say, Mary Ann? That yer poor ould mother's too racint? Fhat's racint?" demanded the old lady, turning suddenly upon her.

"You are too fresh."

"An' maybe ye'd like ter *salt* me, me daughter, Mary Ann? Wud ye stand by an' sae yer poor old mother thraduced?"

"Oh, come on!" said the indignant daughter of the period, starting to go.

The mother started to follow her, but suddenly remembering the indignity she had suffered at the hands of Mrs. Scratcher, she stopped and began to shake her big fist at the front door.

"Bad manners ter ye, ye stuck up ould Jazebel. Come out here forninst the dure and I'll tache ye more manners in wan minute than ye iver knew in the whole course av yer loife, so I will!"

"Oh, come on, mother. Don't be so loud?"

"Fhat's that ye soy, Mary Ann?"

"They're too toney here for us. Let's go somewhere else and not bother with the place," said the daughter.

"Wud ye sae yer ould mother insulted?"

"No, but let's skip out."

"Skip! Maybe it's skippin' the tra-lal-lu, ye mane?"

"Oh, no. Come on, we shall only make a show of ourselves staying here."

"Bad manners ter the ould hen!" she again cried, turning towards the house, as she started to go away. "But I'll get even wid her yet, so I will. Ah! go ter blazes wid yer ould house!" was her parting blessing, as she followed her daughter.

Well, she did get even with the mother-in-law, in this way: She went to about a dozen of her acquaintances and told them that there was a beautiful floor to let in such a place, and urged them to go and see it without fail, the result being that every one of those friends—rag, tag and bobtail—put in an appearance at Mr. Jumper's house, and nearly worried the life out of his mother-in-law by demanding to see the flat, and knowing what the rent was.

And so one day passed, amounting to nothing beyond fretting Mrs. Scratcher to the verge of the grave, and giving Mr. Jumper a chance to laugh at her expense, which, of course, did not make her a whit more angelic.

The next day was inaugurated by the appearance of an old Dutch woman, who wanted to know about the place and the rent demanded.

"You will not like the floor," said Mrs. Scratcher.

"How vos dot? How you know dot I like not what I hafe not seen?" demanded the woman.

"But the rent," suggested Mrs. Scratcher.

"Vot vos dot?"

"One hundred and fifty dollars per month," said she, for the purpose of crushing her at one swoop.

"Dot vos all right."

"What! how many in the family?"

"I geepe a poarding-house."

"Great Heavens! do you imagine that we would rent such a flat as this for a boarding-house?"

"I know noddings 'bout dot."

"Well, I do. You cannot have it," said Mrs. Scratcher, with emphasis.

"Dot seddles id," replied the woman, turning in disgust.

Mrs. Scratcher was in torment. Not a solitary eligible party had as yet made application

for the flat, and it began to look as though there was but a slim chance of her letting it within the time she had named.

But to make it all the warmer for her, Mr. Jumper had taken particular pains to go around among a certain class, who were, of course, ineligible, and ask them to inspect the premises.

The result was that at the end of three days the old girl's patience was nearly exhausted, and the flat was as far from being rented as ever. But, in the meantime, Jumper had put an advertisement in one of the daily papers, calling attention to the flat, and during the next two days the front door was besieged with women who wanted to inspect the premises, and as none of them were able to hire such expensive apartments, Mrs. Scratcher, of course, became nearly wild, and finally threw up the agency in disgust, which led to another pleasant little scene between her and her son-in-law, in which she had the words and he the best of the argument.

Then Jumper took the matter in hand again, and as fortune would have it, rented the flat the very next day to a family by the name of Birch, a lawyer, and on account of this success his mother-in-law retired into temporary obscurity and had but little to say.

The next day the new tenant moved in, and the old lady and her daughter found ample amusement in peeping through the front-room blinds and inspecting every visible article of furniture, and speculating upon the contents of boxes and barrels which provokingly kept other things from sight.

On the whole the exhibition was not altogether satisfactory. According to their notions the Birch's didn't have any too much furniture, and it was several years behind the fashions, so they felt it to be their duty to inform Mr. Jumper, that he might be on his guard, although in truth the old lady was secretly delighted and hoped that they would turn out to be frauds after all, as that would partially recompense her for her defeat in the matter of attempting to let the flat herself.

Just how much of a lawyer Birch was was not known by the landlord, but it was not long before he found out, for scarcely had they got their effects settled than he demanded some repairs done, at which Jumper remonstrated.

But this was just what Birch wanted, evidently, for he threatened him with all sorts of law and suits for damages, to say nothing of withholding his rent, and seeing that an open rupture would not only be disagreeable in itself but give his beloved mother-in-law a chance to crow, he finally consented to make the alterations and repairs, and by doing so he put himself in the power of Birch very effectually, for he was afraid of him as well as the mother-in-law, and so unwittingly placed himself between two fires.

When the next month came around Mr. Birch declined to pay his rent on account of some fancied bad ventilation which he said had made his wife sick, and with the utmost impudence threatened to have the house indicted by the Board of Health if he had the audacity to ever demand another month's rent.

This put Jumper on his metal, and he resolved to show fight and see how much of a lawyer Birch was, and whether he could continue to live in the most elegant flat in his brown stone house without going through with the usual formality of paying the rent.

But here he was again still on the one horn of the dilemma—his mother-in-law—and so he resolved to keep the matter of the legal fight from both her and his wife until after he should triumph, and even then to allow it to be supposed by them that Mr. Birch moved out of his own accord.

So they joined issue, and the case went to trial, when Jumper soon learned that there are ways that are dark, and tricks that are not in vain in a civil justice court, for, by some legal hocus-pocus or other, the case was adjourned in order to give Birch a chance to prepare a bill of damages and get the Board of Health to inspect the house.

This was a defeat for Jumper, and the entering wedge for a long legal contest, which, although

it finally resulted in a triumph for our landlord, gave Mr. Birch about four months' rent free. But he had the good sense to move out at the end of that time without telling anybody why he did so, and this was another triumph for Jumper, since his mother-in-law obtained no clew to the real truth.

In all probability this was an old game of Birch's, and, on the whole, rather a profitable one, enabling him to live rent free for the most part, although it was rough on his household furniture, and probably accounted for its battered and worn appearance which Mrs. Scratcher and her daughter had noticed when it came into the house.

Well, that flat was again to rent, but to avoid all the bother that had so stirred the house before, it was placed in the hands of a real estate agent and rented before the expiration of a week; and that, too, without any trouble. This taught him a trick in the management of his property.

Once again everything was lovely in the home of our landlord, and rents poured in upon him with such a silvery flood that he began to think there was no day of reckoning wherein he should be counted out, or behind.

As for the new tenant—the doctor on the second floor—there seemed to be nothing wanting. He had a nice family, and was very quiet and seemingly respectable.

In fact, there did not seem to be a chance for Jumper's mother-in-law to get in on any account, and having nothing for her venom to feed upon, she seemed about to dry up and blow away, and leave everybody else to continue in their legitimate business without let or hindrance.

Well, this felicitous state of affairs lasted for at least a month, when a terrible thing happened—happened to our landlord and his house.

One night, about midnight, there was an alarm of fire, and the whole household was aroused, and instantly became intent upon saving its most valuable and most worthy.

Policemen caught the alarm, and pounded upon his carved door with their clubs.

Mr. Jumper was aroused.

So was his wife and mother-in-law.

Also the servants.

Also the other inmates of the house.

Jumper saw the danger of the situation, and seizing the kitchen stove, rushed out of the front door.

By this time the whole house was alarmed, and things began to be lively.

Looking-glasses, feather beds, aquariums, statues, painted china, articles of vertu, and all sorts of things were being pitched out of the windows and doors, and Mr. Jumper stood where he received the largest share of them.

He howled and called for the police.

The police came, but mistaking him for a thief, they battered him with their clubs, and took him to the station-house.

Then his mother-in-law came rushing downstairs with an old-fashioned hair-covered trunk, which was supposed to contain all her earthly goods.

After her came her daughter, calling loudly for her husband who had been taken away, and vowing that she would live no longer if he was swallowed up by the flames.

Then came Mrs. Cutter, the dressmaker, and Miss Vestvalia, the actress, with her arms full of wardrobes, and in less than five minutes the stairs were crowded, and the outside front looked like a panic-stricken circus.

Then came the steam fire engines and arranged themselves in front of the house, and the Insurance Patrol seized everything they could get hands on, and huddled all together on the other side of the street.

All was excitement and individual sensation.

The engineer rushed into the house in search of the fire.

Up-stairs, down-stairs, and into the lady's chamber they went, but no sign of fire could they find.

Up to the top flat did they go, and there they found Professor Grimshaw, still intent upon an experiment he had been making.

That experiment had occasioned the alarm of fire. It was something in relation to electric

lighting, and that had produced the alarm from the occupants of Mrs. Cutter's flat.

"What are you doing here?" demanded the engineer, confronting him.

"Who are you?" said he.

"Where is the fire?"

"Right here," and thinking that perhaps they might be visiting scientists who had heard of his experiments and had come to see them, he at once proposed to show them all about the matter.

"But where is the fire?" they continued, looking anxiously around the rooms.

"Right here. There is my electric generator, and this is my——"

"But where is the fire?"

"I produce it in this way," said he, starting his electro-magnetic engine.

"Oh, that be hanged!"

"Yes, I hung it in this way."

"But where is the fire?"

"Wait until I explain it to you."

"Oh, go to——! Say! Who started this?" demanded one of the engineers.

"I claim to be the originator. Here, you——"

"Bah!"

"No, I bar nothing. I admit all the theories that have been advanced since——"

"Oh, go to blazes!" said they, whirling about and leaving the room.

The enthusiastic old scientist was disappointed, and so were the firemen.

They went to the floors below, and finding no fire returned to the companies who were all ready and waiting orders, and told them to go home about their business.

Then came a reaction.

There was no fire after all; and while all the excitement was on hand, the old professor knew nothing about it. He had simply exploded one of his electrical experiments, producing such a flood of light that it had occasioned an alarm that had culminated in a cry of fire.

Then there was "such a getting up-stairs," among the tenants, each one believing that it had been a false alarm, (not knowing the real cause), and so in the course of an hour, quiet reigned again in the house of one landlord—but that landlord, oh! where was he?

It was certainly two hours before he was liberated and allowed to return to his habitation, only to encounter his wife and mother-in-law, who demanded to know where he had been, and why he had deserted them in the hour of peril, unless, as his wife's mother strongly hinted, he was in hopes that the house would burn down, and they would be destroyed with it.

Jumper wanted to talk back, but if he did so, he would certainly have to explain his absence, and to do that would expose himself to the shafts of ridicule which would be hurled at him by those two benevolent females, and believing that the least said would be the soonest mended, he said nothing, and allowed them to think what they pleased.

Then he set about assisting his tenants to get their things into shape and position again, and to ascertain, if possible, the cause of the alarm which had occasioned so much anxiety and trouble.

But the nearest he could come to it was what he learned from Mrs. Cutter, the aristocratic *modiste*, and she, between her hysterical sobs, could only say that she all at once saw a great flash of light, accompanied by sharp, crackling sounds, and a peculiar smell, and believing the house to be on fire, she had screamed at the full capacity of her lungs, and started the circus.

Not another person seemed to know more than she did, and even the old professor on the top floor, whom he found still deep in his great electrical experiments, knew nothing about fire, further than that two firemen had burst into his rooms demanding to know where it was, and that he had referred them to his wonderful invention for illuminating the world by electricity, in which they appeared to have not the slightest interest.

And so the investigation ended, and the blame rested on poor, frightened Mrs. Cutter, who probably got carried away by her imagination.

But it took several days to get people quieted down, during which Mrs. Jumper and her mother scarcely spoke to our landlord, fully believing that he had intentionally left them to the flames for the purpose of getting rid of them, all of which made it very pleasant for Jumper.

A week or so from that time news came that a sister of Mrs. Jumper, living in Chicago, was very sick, and it was agreed that Mr. and Mrs. Jumper should pay her a visit, leaving Mrs. Scratcher to look after things at home.

On arriving at Chicago they found the sister very low, but slowly improving, and after remaining a week it was agreed that Mrs. Jumper should remain a few days longer, and that he should return to New York to attend to business.

"Now, Skidmore, dear, be very careful, won't you?" she asked, as they were about to part.

"Careful about what?" he asked, in wonder.

"Why, you are going *alone*."

"Well, what of that? Have you any fear that I shall get lost?"

"Oh, for that matter, probably not, but you know that a man who is traveling alone is subject to all sorts of temptations."

"Nonsense; you know I never play cards."

"But cards and gambling on railroad trains are not the only temptations which may beset a man traveling alone."

"Well, what else? Are you afraid that I should buy too many prize packages of candy or more newspapers than I want to read?"

"No, but there are designing females who are continually on the lookout for unsuspecting men like you."

"Bah!" was his only reply, and he started to go.

"Mind, Skiddy, dear, I am not jealous in the least, only I just speak of the subject so that you may be warned. But if you was a poor man no woman in the world would take the least notice of you. They want your money."

"Well, if I have lived to be fifty years of age and don't know too much to be caught by designing people such as you speak of, I think I have lived long enough and ought to die," said he, emphatically.

"That's so, of course, but it is well enough to be on your guard, you know. By-by, hubby, kiss me," she added, putting up her face.

Jumper never would have done so if she hadn't asked him, and she knew it, for even though they were married, and had been for a long time, he never took any liberties with his wife's lips unless invited to do so.

But they finally tore themselves apart, he promising to telegraph her from different points along the line to assure her of his safety, and also of his arrival home, while she agreed to do the same thing when she started from Chicago home.

Taking a carriage, he rode to the depot and there found that he had half an hour to spare before the train started, and like almost any other stranger, he sauntered around to see what there was to be seen.

In the ladies' waiting-room he saw a young lady who was weeping and apparently in great trouble. This at once interested him, for Mr. Jumper was a very tender-hearted, sympathetic man, and finally he ventured to ask her what the trouble was.

She was far from being a beauty, either in style, form or feature, but there was something interesting about her. Had she, however, been as homely as sin, her tears would have touched Mr. Jumper just as quickly as though she had been a beauty.

"Oh, sir," said she, "I am a stranger in a strange city, and having had my pocket picked, I have no money to pay my fare home."

"Indeed, that is too bad," said Jumper, with much feeling in his tone. "Where do you live?"

"In New York, sir," and again her tears burst out afresh.

"Why, I live there myself, and am just going to start, so dry your tears and I will take you along with me."

"Oh, Heaven bless you, sir! I—I didn't know that there was such a kind man in the world," she suddenly exclaimed, as she seized his hand.

"Gracious, I hope there are many. Where is your baggage?"

"The baggage master has it."

"All right. Come with me and I will see it properly checked for you."

"Oh, you are so kind, sir, and I will repay you on my arrival home."

"Don't mention it, my dear young lady," said he, going towards the trunk-room.

In a few moments her trunk was checked and she was smiling through her tears.

"Now for your ticket," said he, going to the office window.

"What a dear good man," murmured the befriended girl. "I thought he was a dear good soul the moment he came into the depot."

And as for Mr. Jumper, he believed himself to be doing really a charitable act, and that was enough for him, although he could but feel that it would be nice to have an interesting female traveling companion during the long journey from Chicago to New York.

Never a thought that he was compromising himself in the least entered his head. He was simply doing as he would like to be done by, or as he would wish another person to do for a daughter of his, should she be as unfortunate as this poor creature appeared to be.

Everything being arranged, they finally took a seat in the Pullman Palace Car, and were soon on the road, puffing away from puffing Chicago.

Jumper paid his companion all necessary little attentions, so far as related to her comfort, and soon found that she was quite a pleasant, entertaining body. Her tears were all dried up now, and where she had looked rather homely before, she now appeared to be quite good-looking.

They chatted in a pleasant way mile after mile, although Jumper was too modest a man to ask her name or anything else about her, thinking it none of his business, and being entirely satisfied with doing what he considered his duty.

Consequently their conversation was of a general nature, and she was well enough acquainted with the world to wonder why he was not more curious regarding her.

Finally, this absence of curiosity on his part aroused hers to know something respecting him, and so she began to hint around in a general way, which would be likely, if managed rightly, to lead the conversation up to personalities.

But Mr. Jumper was a man who almost always kept himself to himself with strangers, and it was not until they had been several hours on the road that he began to feel that he was no longer a stranger to her.

CHAPTER III.

WE left Mr. Skidmore Jumper, our landlord, on the road from Chicago to New York, seated by the side of rather an interesting young lady, whom he had met in a sadly impecunious condition at the depot there, and whose passage he had generously volunteered to pay, being actuated by the most kindly and charitable feelings.

It will be remembered that he had left his wife in Chicago with a sick sister, and that she was to follow him in a few days, and that he met this friendless young creature soon afterwards.

As yet he had not ventured to inquire her name, or anything further relating to her than that she lived in New York, and had been so unfortunate as to have her pocket picked in the heavenly city of Chicago.

They were at least five hours upon the road before anything came up in the remotest manner relating to who either he or she might be, and this indifference on his part aroused her curiosity, and she began to beat around the bush in quest of information.

"Isn't life queer?" she began.

"Well, rather," he replied.

"Such anomalies."

"Well, yes."

"Such masquerades."

"Oh, yes."

"Now our meeting is so strange."

"Yes."

"So romantic."

"Yes."

"You do not know my name and I do not know yours."

"True."

"And yet we are friends?"

"Very true."

"And isn't that strange?"

"Very."

"For all I know, you may be a millionaire."

"Well, yes," and Jumper looked at her in surprise.

"And you, an honorable man, through the generous impulses of your heart, might be led to compromise yourself, especially if you were married," she said, with a tone of sadness in her voice.

"Married," he said, musingly.

"Yes, this disinterested conduct on your part might be used against you by your wife."

"Oh, no; I guess not," replied Jumper, and it suddenly occurred to him that she was beating around the bush to see if she could frighten up a wife.

"Is she in love with me for my little acts of kindness towards her?" he mused. "It must be so. What shall I do? Why, tell her I am married, of course. What would any honest man do?"

"Heigho! Do you know this—I never yet took a fancy to a gentleman but that he was engaged in some way or manner to another. I believe it is my fate never to be loved," said she, with downcast eyes.

"Oh, I trust not," said Jumper, and then the innocent thought came into his head that she wanted more sympathy than he was bestowing upon her.

"I fear so," she replied, and then she glanced up at him with her sad, eloquent blue eyes.

"It is my duty to comfort this lady," thought Jumper. "In fact, I simply do what I would thank a man for doing to a daughter of mine in the same situation. But if I tell her—tell her that I am married—wonder if it would hurt her feelings? I—I wouldn't like to do that. She is evidently lonesome. I always was such a poor hand at entertaining a lady. Perhaps I'd better not speak of my being married; it might hurt her feelings, and the poor girl has trouble enough already."

Thus mused the innocent and unsophisticated Mr. Jumper as he rode along by her side.

"Will you not tell me your name?" she asked, suddenly breaking in upon his musings.

"Certainly, my name is Skidmore Jumper," said he.

"Thanks, and mine is Bella Kelsey," she replied, placing her hand upon his arm. "And now we are acquainted, aren't we?"

"Well, at least we know each other's name."

"Yes, that is so—only that, after all. And we may never become acquainted," she added, with a sound of sorrow in her voice.

"But I trust we may."

"Yes, but it will be simply acquainted; nothing like I yearn for."

"What is it you yearn for?" he asked, quickly, and looking at her as though the idea suddenly got into his head that the poor girl was hungry.

"Something I shall never obtain, I fear; a true and loving heart that will beat responsive to my own," said she.

Mr. Jumper was silent. No, she wasn't hungry in the common acceptance of the term, but she was craving for sympathy.

"Yes, it is always my fate—if I become interested in a gentleman, perhaps to learn to love him, it always turns out that he is married."

"Well, that is too bad."

"It is fate."

"Perhaps you will yet find one."

"Alas! I fear not, and I hardly dare ask you if you are married, fearing to hear the same reply. Pardon me, but you have been so kind to me, you seem so like my own dear, dead father, that I cannot help addressing you—confiding in you, just as though you really were my father."

"The poor, fatherless girl," thought Jumper. "She needs sympathy—is entitled to it, and shall I hold it from her? Never!"

"You will pardon my forwardness, will you not?" she asked, with sad sweetness.

"Certainly. Speak your mind freely."

"As I almost would to my real father?"

"Certainly."

"Have you children of your own?"

"I have no children."

"But you—you are married?"

"N—n—no," he managed to worry out, but it was an effort which made him blush like a beet, and caused the young lady to half suspect that he was telling a falsehood.

"No? And you are not really married?" she asked, with great animation.

"No; I—"

"Oh, I am so glad!"

"Why?"

"Because I shall not be the means of compromising you now,—shall I?"

"Certainly not."

"And we will become better acquainted—will we not? It seems as though Heaven sent you across my track, Mr. Jumper."

"I hope it may prove so, Miss Kelsey, for I like to feel that I am doing its behests."

"You are so good and so kind! And so you are not married? Good!" she exclaimed, with a laughing vehemence which would have aroused the suspicion of any person in the world but Jumper.

But he looked at it in this light: that this young lady was so thankful for the kindness he had extended to her, and was only anxious not to compromise him. It was a most noble feeling, and he honored her for it. How few people in this world would have been troubled with any such emotion, he thought.

What a nice girl she was, to be sure, and he wouldn't—couldn't think of hurting her feelings by telling her that he was married, knowing from what she had said how much she disliked married men.

"I am a school teacher," said she, after seeing that his curiosity would not prompt him to ask the question.

"That is nice," was his reply.

"Yes, and I expect to get a school in Brooklyn in a few months. You see I am an orphan, and have to depend entirely upon my own exertions."

"I sympathize with you, Miss Kelsey."

"Yes, your actions tell me that, and I hope you are so rich that taking me under your charge for this trip will not inconvenience you in the least."

"Oh, not in the least."

"I really hope you are rich, for such noble-hearted men as you are should be rich in order to have the power to work out the impulses of their natures."

"Well, I am not exactly a poor man, although there are many richer than I am," replied Mr. Jumper, modestly.

"Thank Heaven for that; I wish you had a million for every generous impulse of your heart, and if there were more such men in the world, the world would be better."

He actually blushed at her enthusiasm.

"I fear you rate my goodness too high."

"No, that cannot be, and I thank Heaven for raising me up such a friend."

This was a trifle more than he could make a reply to, so he remained silent and thought what a very appreciative girl this Miss Kelsey was. It was really a pleasure to help such a person as she was.

But he had told her that he was a single man; told her a lie, just to please her, and in spite of all he could do, that haunted him continually. He would liked to have withdrawn the statement and told the truth, but fearing that he might hurt her feelings, he could not.

And so they journeyed towards the east, becoming better friends and better acquainted every hour, until at length Jumper began to feel that he had more than an ordinary interest in the girl, and if not with his tongue, at least with his eyes, told her so, as she was not backward in telling him.

But the nearer they came to New York, the more nervous did Mr. Jumper become, for wasn't he approaching his mother-in-law? And wasn't that enough to make him nervous?

Finally, on reaching New York, he had made up his mind to break off all the little friendly relations which had sprung up between them,

and cut the sentimental young schoolmarm forever.

So the first thing he did on reaching the depot, was to hire a carriage to send her to her friends, although it was quite evident that she didn't wish to go so abruptly.

"But you will come and see me soon, will you not?" she asked, pleadingly.

"Oh, certainly, in a few days," replied Mr. Jumper, although he hadn't the remotest idea of doing anything of the kind.

"Because I wish to repay you the money you were so kind as to advance me."

"Oh, don't mention it. That's all right. Good-by, Miss Kelsey," and he handed her into the carriage in a nervous way, glancing around as though expecting to be confronted by his mother-in-law.

"Good-by, my dear, good friend. Don't wait too long before you come, for I wish to introduce you to my folks, and let them thank you for your kindness."

"Oh, no. I—I prefer that you say nothing about it to anyone. Good-by," and taking her extended hand he shook it modestly, and then turned away to shake the owner of it.

"That settles the business," mused Jumper, as he turned away. "Nice girl enough, but because I did her a little favor she must go and get to loving me. And I was assinine enough to half encourage her by telling her that I was single. Why didn't I know enough about women to know that they snap at a single man like a pickerel at a frog. Bah! this foolish, tender heart of mine is forever getting me into trouble. But, thank goodness, I am out of it all right and she don't know where I live."

Thus he mused as he rode in another carriage toward his home.

"Oh, what a dear, good man?" said Miss Kelsey, as she also rode along. "Oh, if I could only catch such a husband! I wonder if he is married? It doesn't seem possible that such a man could tell a lie. But I'll direct the driver to follow his carriage so that I can see where he goes, and then if he don't call on me, I will call on him, and have the repayment of the money for my excuse—of course I will."

These instructions were given and followed out to the letter by the driver, and of course she soon became aware of the residence of her benefactor.

Mrs. Scratcher, Jumper's mother-in-law, gave him a very cordial welcome. In fact, she almost gushed over him, and for the time being his life seemed perfectly roseate, and all his troubles vanished. Even the servant girl, Mary O'Callahan (fine old Turkish name, that), noticed it, and wondered what had come over the old girl.

This Mary O'Callahan was a jewel in her way, a quiet, sensible girl, with just brogue enough to make her conversation interesting, and good sense enough to let her eyes do more for her than her tongue.

Skidmore Jumper had made a note of this fact a long while ago, and with a quiet "quarter" or "half," judiciously "placed" once in a while, he fortified himself in her esteem, and to such an extent that she was almost ready to pitch into either mother-in-law or wife in his behalf.

So much for Mary just now.

The next day she was summoned to the door by a gentle tintinabulation of the bell metal, connected by wire with the silver-plated bell knob; and who should stand there but Miss Kelsey, arrayed in extra splendor, or such as a fashionable young lady would be apt to assume when throwing aside a traveling dress.

"Well?" was Mary's first salutation.

"Is Mr. Jumper in?" asked the impressive schoolmarm.

"Maybe he is."

"Please tell him that a young lady of his acquaintance would like to see him in the parlor."

"Are ye sure?"

"What is that you ask? Sure of what?" the schoolmarm asked, indignantly.

"That he is in."

"Well, I take it for granted that he is," said she, walking in.

Mary would probably have called the mother-in-law had she not the night before received

"LOOK IN THE GLASS?" HE ASKED, TURNING TOWARD IT. AND BY THE LIGHT, WHICH HAD NOW BECOME QUITE STRONG, HE SAW A REFLECTION WHICH ALMOST PARALYZED HIM.



half a dollar from the willing palm of our landlord.

As it was, she allowed the visitor to seat herself in the parlor, after which she went in search of Mr. Jumper.

She found him in the back yard arranging a grape-vine over an arbor.

"Whist!" said Mary.

Mr. Jumper looked towards her.

"Well, what is it?" he asked.

"Whist!" and she placed her finger on her lip.

"What do you mean?"

"Come near me!" again in a whisper.

"Come near you!" said Jumper, approaching her, wonderingly. "What is it?"

"A girl, sure," whispered Mary.

"A girl! Well, what of it?"

"She wants ter spake wid ye, sure."

"A girl—wants to speak with me! How old is she, Mary?"

"Faith, old enough ter be married."

"Did you ask her name?"

"Yes, but she bade me say that a young lady of your acquaintance wishes ter see ye."

"Oh, all right. Some confounded begging arrangement, I suppose. Tell her that I will see her presently."

"All roight, sur, but——"

"But what, Mary?" asked Mr. Jumper.

"She's foine-lookin'."

"Well, what of that?"

"Maybe ye wuden't loike ter have Mrs. Scratcher see her?"

"Oh, I don't care. It's my niece from Vermont, perhaps. Tell her that I will see her presently," continuing his work.

Mary returned to the parlor.

"Confound these relations," said Mr. Jumper. "Now what do I care for this sister's child! I never saw her in my life, and here her mother writes to me, and I get the letter on my return, that Bella would be here sometime this week to visit with me, and possibly make my house her home until she finished her education. Well, if I was certain that she was a nice-looking young girl—well, I guess I will go in and see how she looks, anyhow," he added, leaving his work and starting into the house.

In the kitchen he encountered Mary again.

"Well?"

"It's all roight, sur," said she, with a particularly knowing look.

"What is all right?"

"She's in the parlor, an' I towld her ye'd soon be wid her."

"Well, that's all right enough," replied Mr. Jumper, turning to go.

"Av course it is, because the ould woman's out."

"Confound you! what do you mean?" he demanded, angrily.

"Nothing at all, sur," said she, turning away to her work.

Mr. Jumper turned with a frown and started for the parlor, leaving the servant girl with a large-sized grin on her face.

Reaching the parlor door, he threw it open, and a female figure started towards him.

"Oh, my dear—dear good friend!" she exclaimed, holding out both her hands.

It was Miss Kelsey!

Mr. Jumper started back as though in danger of being run over by a train of cars.

"Goodness gracious! *You* here?" he asked, in great astonishment.

"Yes; and arn't you glad to see me?"

"Well, I——"

If his mother-in-law should happen to come in upon them now.

"You see, I was afraid that in the goodness of your heart you would not come to see me for fear that I might offer to repay you the money you so generously loaned me, and so I took pains to find you out, and here I am with the money and my thanks."

"Oh, don't mention it; it is a matter of no importance whatever. You see, I——" and here he started suddenly, and glanced at the door with great anxiety.

"Now sit down here by me, for I have lots to tell you, and have come for a long chat," said she gayly, taking him by the arm and pulling him towards a sofa.

"No—no, not now; I—I'm very busy just now. In fact, I——"

"Oh, you can spare me a few moments, I am sure. Don't you know what you told me on board the train?"

"Oh, confound the train! Confound everybody who ever ran a train?" thought Jumper, in his misery.

"But you are not glad to see me?" she said, a trifle hurt at his confusion.

"No—that is—yes, to be sure, but I—I——"

"You wish I had not come, though?"

"Oh, no, only the fact is, I——"

"I understand it now. My coming here embarrasses you. Very well, here is your money."

"No—no, don't mention it, I don't want it, I make you a present of it," said he, hurriedly, at the same time looking as though he wanted her to go very badly.

"But I will not receive it as a gift, sir. I, too, have a character to protect," said she, coming upon her dignity with a jump.

"You make—oh, Lord!" he groaned, glancing out of the window and beholding his mother-in-law just entering the house.

"What is the matter, Mr. Jumper?"

"I have it, I——"

"Well, I should certainly say that you had something very painful," said she, laughing.

"Yes, very; a mother-in-law."

"A mother-in-law! I thought you was a bachelor?" said she, still laughing.

"Well, yes, so I am—that is, she is some other man's mother-in-law—no—I say, she is coming! Let me introduce you to her as my niece, just come from Vermont, and I will explain everything to you afterwards."

"Anything to oblige one who has been so kind to me, certainly."

"Oh, angel!" he cried, at the suddenly opened avenue of escape, all of which convinced the grateful school teacher that he was married, and was placed in an embarrassing position by her presence in his house.

The next moment the door opened, and Mrs. Scratcher, dressed for a walk, came into the room. On seeing the stranger she paused.

"Ah! my dear mother-in-law, allow me to introduce you to my niece," said he, at the same time blushing scarlet.

"Oh, indeed! Is this Lucy's child? Well, I am delighted," said the old lady, taking her by the hand and kissing her tenderly.

"Thank you," said Miss Kelsey.

"She has just got in, you know," said Jumper, lying in advance for her, thus gallantly saving her from having to do so.

"Then she must be tired."

"Of course. It is a long ride from here to Montpelier, Vermont," said he, again posting her as to where she was supposed to hail from.

"Certainly. Make yourself at home until I have changed my dress, and then I will entertain you, and lunch will soon be ready."

"Oh, thank you," said she.

"I'll entertain her until you return," said Jumper, eagerly, for he wanted to get her out of the room, feeling that five minutes more of that strain upon his nerves would drive him to madness.

The old lady swept from the room, and Jumper leaped to his feet.

"Now, if you wish to manifest your appreciation of what I did for you, leave the house at once, and never be seen near here again," said he, earnestly.

"But how about my relationship; how will you account for my sudden departure?"

"Oh, I'll fix that; I'll tell her that you have gone out shopping, or something."

"But what will she say when she finds I do not return?"

"I'll—I'll tell her that you probably got lost somewhere."

At that moment a carriage stopped in front of the house, and the driver assisted a young lady to alight.

"There she comes now!"

"Who?"

"Why, the very niece I was expecting. Good! Now you go right out and I will put her in your place, and trust to luck for the old lady's not discovering the difference."

"Very ingenious, and I trust it will work to

your entire satisfaction," said she, laughing merrily at him.

"Hush! Don't laugh so loud. There goes the bell!" said he, almost shoving her out through the parlor door.

"But shall I never see you again?"

"Oh, yes, certainly, some time. But go now, and if ever I get a chance I will make a full explanation."

Then he opened the front door, and on the spur of the moment almost hugged the young lady standing there, taking it for granted that she was his niece.

But it wasn't her at all. Starting back in an affrighted way, she demanded to know if Miss Vestvalia resided there.

Mr. Jumper almost fainted, while Miss Kelsey laughed merrily, and as she went tripping down the front stoop, she kissed her hand back at him, saying:

"Good-bye, Uncle Skidmore. Ta—ta. Love to mamma-in-law."

By this time Miss Vestvalia's servant had reached the front door—her bell having been rung unbeknown to Jumper—and the young lady visitor was escorted up to the third flat, leaving Mr. Jumper paralyzed almost.

"What the mischief was to be done now?"

In a dazed sort of way he walked back into his parlor, and tried to collect his wits for the coming encounter with his mother-in-law.

She finally came in, and finding Jumper alone, asked him where his niece was.

"Gone to the—the depot, for her trunk," said he, after hesitating a moment.

"Gone to bring her trunk? Why did she not bring it when she came?"

"Well, I—I suppose she wasn't exactly certain where to find us. Women are so queer, you know," and Jumper actually tried to laugh.

"Indeed; but why didn't you accompany her?"

"Oh, she said she could find her way back all right. Very independent sort of a girl, I guess."

"I should say she was," and she gave him a look that made him uncomfortable. "If she is going to live with us any length of time, I shall endeavor to squelch some of her independence, and call her to an account for this impudent act," saying which she strode from the room.

Scarcely had he recovered himself, however, before his servant girl intruded her head at the door.

"Whist!"

"What is it?" he asked, eagerly.

"Another wan!" she whispered.

"What?"

"Another nace, sure; she's at the dure."

"Oh, pitch and tar pots! Show her in, Mary?" and the next moment our landlord was confronted by his real niece.

CHAPTER IV.

WAS an innocent man ever placed in such an awkward position as Skidmore Jumper was as we left him at the end of the preceding chapter?

There he stood holding the hand of his niece, whose inopportune arrival at his house will be remembered, and expecting every moment to see his mother-in-law return to the room.

In fact, he acted so strangely that his niece did not know what to make of it.

"Are you my Uncle Skidmore?" she asked, looking at him in all her innocence.

"Yes—that is—no," he stammered.

"Yes and no?"

"To be sure—that is to say—how are the folks? How's your mother?"

"Very well, indeed, but I don't exactly understand you. If you are my uncle, you don't appear to be very glad to see me," said she, while the tears glistened in her eyes.

"No—yes—well, that is, you see I am not feeling very well to-day, and—oh, how in thunder shall I get out of this scrape?" he thought to himself.

"Are you feeling ill, Uncle Skidmore?"

"Oh, yes, very ill—ill at ease. Now, Bella, oblige me, and I will afterward explain all," said he, suddenly taking her hands.

"Why I would do anything for you, uncle."

"Heaven bless you," said he, kissing her, and

glancing hurriedly toward the door, through which his mother-in-law might come at any moment. "My trouble is simply this: There was a young lady whom I befriended on a recent trip from Chicago to New York. She was just here to repay and thank me again, and my mother-in-law, Mrs. Scratcher, came in, and I introduced her as my niece. It was very foolish, but I did it, for the old woman is a jealous creature, and might have suspected that something wrong was going on. She has only just left the house, and Mrs. Scratcher will soon return to entertain her, for your aunt is yet in Chicago, and if you will only assume that you have been introduced, and that you are the same person she saw here a few moments ago, you will get me out of a very annoying and absurd operation."

"I don't know as I can succeed, but for your sake, Uncle Skidmore, I will try," said she, with innocent earnestness.

"Oh, thank you. I will tell you all about it shortly, and convince you that you are doing nothing wrong. Take off your things, and that will help carry out the deception;" and the girl did as directed, half wonderingly, and half pleased at the absurdity of the situation.

"I hope I may succeed."

"Oh, I am sure you will. All you have to do is to assume that you have already been introduced, and receive whatever attention she may bestow upon you as a matter of course. She will be here presently and I will say that you have just returned from the depot with your trunk."

"Returned?"

"Yes, for just as soon as I could get Mrs. Scratcher out of the room to change her dress, I hurried this supposed niece from the house and told her that she had returned to the depot for her trunk and would soon be back again."

"But won't that be fibbing, Uncle Skidmore?"

"I'll attend to that part of the business, and everything will be lovely. All you have to do is to simply acquiesce in what I say. It will not amount to anything, and will relieve me of much possible trouble. Hush! There, remove your things and take a seat there with a book, while I go and inform her that you have returned," said Jumper, giving her a reassuring kiss and going from the room.

"What a queer reception and introduction this is to be sure," mused Miss Bella Snell, the niece of our perturbed landlord, as she took up a book and tried to compose herself for the task she had assumed.

One thing was very certain, and in her uncle's favor; she hated that mother-in-law without ever having seen her. Being an artless young lady just from school, and quite as innocent as seventeen year-old school girls generally are, she could scarcely understand what her uncle's trouble was, but having a large amount of faith in human nature in general, and her uncle in particular (her mother having told her so much regarding what a nice man he was), she resolved upon straining a point to assist him.

But it may well be believed that Mr. Jumper was very nervous, nevertheless, for he knew that mother-in-law of his, and how keen she was at scenting anything.

However, he braced himself up and sought her in the kitchen, whither she had gone to see about lunch.

"Bella has returned," said he.

"Indeed—so soon?"

"Yes. She only had to drive right to the Grand Central Depot and right back again. How soon will lunch be ready?"

"In just a bit," said the servant, glancing at him, with a half exploded laugh in her face.

That expression of hers was good for a dollar note just as soon as he could get a chance to place it in her hand unobserved.

"Better come in and entertain her, for you know that I am the poorest person in the world to entertain a lady," said Mr. Jumper.

"Funny if you can't entertain your own sister's child. But do you know, I can't see as she looks a particle like you," said Mrs. Scratcher.

"No, she does not, but she is the very image of her mother."

"Well, I'll soon be in."

Mr. Jumper returned to the parlor.

"It's all right. She is superintending lunch and will soon come in. Never mind any introduction, and I am sure she will never know the difference. Ah! here she comes! Sit perfectly quiet, and let she and I do the talking."

Mrs. Scratcher glided into the room with her company smile on.

"Ah! returned, eh?" she asked, pleasantly, and without looking at her further than to note the style and quality of her dress. "I suppose you have never traveled so far before?"

"Never; this is my first experience," said Bella, artlessly, but her voice caused Mrs. Scratcher to glance at her sharply.

"Mercy, how it does change you to have your wraps off. Why, you don't look like the same girl," said she, approaching.

Bella did not like her any better than she expected to, and she simply laughed quite indifferently and made no further reply.

"And so you are Lucy Snell's daughter?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"How old are you?"

"Seventeen last September."

"Well, never having seen your mother, I cannot tell whether you look like her or not, but one thing I am certain of, and that is that you do not look half so much like your uncle as you did before you took off your things."

"Indeed?"

"Yes; I'd almost swear that you are not the young lady at all that I was introduced to a short time ago," said she, whereat Bella laughed a little inconsequential laugh again.

"What nonsense, mother," said Jumper.

"You remember that you had just returned from a walk, and coming in out of the light into a darkened room you could not see very well at first."

"Oh, I always see well enough to remember faces, light or dark."

"But of course you are wrong, mother," said he.

"Well, I suppose so, of course, but I shall be convinced of it when I see her dressed again as she was just now. But come, there is the bell for lunch. Be good enough to escort her to the dining-room, Skidmore," said she, leading the way thitherward.

Mr. Jumper was only too delighted.

"Bravo!" he whispered, as she took his arm.

"Keep perfectly cool, and we will bluff her yet."

"Oh, Uncle Skidmore, will you be offended with me if I tell you that I dislike her ever so much?"

"Offended! On the contrary, I would be delighted; for then there certainly would be two in my family who felt alike regarding her."

"I thought you could not like such a person. She is a very old vinegar."

"Yes, the mother-of-vinegar. Hush!" he added, as they entered the dining-room.

While lunch was going on Jumper and his niece chatted pleasantly on family matters while Mrs. Scratcher watched her closely, even offensively.

"What is the meaning of this?" she mused.

"If that girl is the same one to whom I was introduced half an hour ago, I shall acknowledge that I have been deceived once in my life. But I will keep very quiet, and see if I can solve the mystery, if one there is, with a velvet cat's paw."

Mr. Jumper began to regain his nerves, and to feel a little more like himself as the lunch proceeded. To all appearances his mother-in-law was completely foiled, and he began to feel better, his only present object being to get Bella out of the house for a few moments' private conversation.

So he said to her after lunch:

"Bella, if you will dress I will take you up to Central Park and show you over it."

"Why, uncle, isn't my traveling dress good enough?" she asked, innocently.

"To be sure it is," said Mrs. Scratcher. "Put it on and let me see you in it again."

"No—no, Bella; don't do it. Put on some other one," said he, seeing Mrs. Scratcher's point.

"What absurdity! Would you have her put on a nice dress to go through the park?"

"To be sure. The park is the most dressy place in New York at this season of the year."

"Oh, then I will certainly oblige you, uncle, for, come to think of it, they would suspect at once that I was from the country if I wore my traveling things."

"Certainly, most undoubtedly. Here, Mary, show her to her room, and then help me take her trunk in," said he, quickly, and by his rapid actions managed to forestall his mother-in-law, whom he suspected of wishing to get alone with Bella, for the purpose of getting a sight of that particular dress which had been worn by Miss Kelsey.

"I'll wager my head that there is something wrong about all this," muttered the old angel, after being left alone, and when Mary returned, she began to catechise her, to see if she knew anything about it, so she began with:

"Mary, did you admit Miss Snell when she came?"

"Faith, I did, was the reply."

"Did you notice anything strange?"

"I did not."

"But this Bella; this niece of Mr. Jumper; does she seem to you the same now as she did when you first admitted her?"

"Troth, she does, marm."

"Are you sure?"

"Faith, I sees no difference."

"But she was dressed differently?"

"Upon me word, I did not see it."

"But the dress she wore?"

"Faith, I did not notice it. I only saw that she war a nice, dacint girl, marm."

"And you saw no difference between her and the young girl who took lunch with us?"

"Divil a thing?"

"Well, it is very strange. You may say nothing about what I have spoken to you about, but I suspect there is something wrong," said she, with great meaning in her face.

"Not wid the master, sure?"

"Don't you be so sure of that, Mary. He is a man—a horrid man, Mary."

"Troth, I don't think men are so horrid, so I don't," said she, smiling.

"Mary, beware! I am a mother. I have seen it all," said she, with dramatic effect.

"Faith, there's where ye have the advantage av me, although I'm willin', too."

"Mary, men are very bad."

"I can't agree wid ye, ma'am."

"You cannot?"

"No. Me father was a man."

"But that does not follow."

"It does not! I'd loike wan av them meself, so I would," said Mary, earnestly.

"Mary, I warn you!"

"How can ye? Sure, if I could only get such a man as ther master—whoop!" she cried, striking a dramatic attitude.

"Mary, you are too enthusiastic."

"What's that ye soy! Hould on now, Mrs. Scratcher. I'm a dacint gurl, so I am; but if ye call me wan av those long names again, I'll take the law on ye, so I will," said Mary, striking her fists together, savagely.

"You mistake me, Mary."

"Divil a wanst! Because I'm a poor gurl, ye think ye can call me 'thusiastic!' I'd have ye ter know, Mrs. Scratcher, that I'm nothin' av the kind, an' if ye soy it again, I'll take the law on ye, so I will."

"But you misunderstand me, child."

"I do not. Ye think because I'm a poor working gurl, that ye can call me all the names ye want to, but ye can't."

"I called you no names, Mary."

"Ye didn't? Whoop!" and the irate daughter of the "old dart" smacked her fists together, and danced around the room like a wild Indian.

"Won't you listen to reason, Mary?"

"Not from the loikes av ye, so I won't."

"But you misunderstand the meaning of the word I made use of in connection with your feelings in this matter," said she, soothingly.

"The manin', is it? Sure it's a mane word onyway, an' if ye call me the loikes av it again, I'll baste yer ould ribs, so I will, if ye are the master's mother-in-law."

Finding it utterly impossible to explain the meaning of the word to the girl, Mrs. Scratcher turned and left the room, not knowing how soon

she might lose her temper entirely, and fly at her like an angry cat.

But Mr. Jumper had made good use of his time, and on arriving at the parlor, she found that he and Miss Bella had gone to the park. She was mad enough to fly, but there was no help for it just then at hand, and she was forced to content herself with examining the few things which the girl had left exposed on going out.

From these, however, she obtained but little satisfaction, although she satisfied her mind that she either did not have the outer garments which she saw at first, or she had worn them out, which was a strange thing to do under the circumstances, seeing that Mr. Jumper had requested her not to do so.

Setting her teeth and lips firmly together she resolved to wait her return, and see for herself whether they were the same or not. Oh, how she did long for the presence of her daughter that she might have some one to communicate her suspicions to. What torture it was to wait!

But meanwhile Mr. Jumper and his niece were riding towards Central Park, and he was giving her a complete history of his relations with the cheeky and impulsive schoolmarm, thereby winning her entire childish sympathy.

But when he came to explain why he did not wish her to wear a certain dress on account of that argus-eyed mother-in-law, she astonished him by proposing that he should buy an outer outfit as nearly like the one worn by Miss Kelsey as possible.

"Bella, you are a thoughtful angel. We will do that very thing before our return, and then the old lady will be completely undermined. Glorious thought! Great idea!" he exclaimed, and he could scarcely find patience to finish the rounds of the park, so anxious was he to carry out the proposition.

Well, he did carry it out, and so effectually, that Mrs. Scratcher was forced to admit to herself that she must have been mistaken.

But somehow or other, there was a nameless certain something connected with the whole affair, which would not down at the bidding of any number of circumstantial evidences, and still she resolved to watch and wait.

As for our landlord, he felt so good over the apparently happy and triumphant termination of the ugly business, that a smile seemed to have settled upon his face to grow there, and nothing that money could buy was too good for his sister's child.

In the course of a few days, Mrs. Jumper began to send telegrams from different stations along the route between Chicago and New York, announcing her approach, and once more the family of Skidmore Jumper was again under his roof, and to all appearances even more happy and united than ever.

It was at about this time that the Bell telephone was beginning to be introduced in the larger cities, and especially in New York.

A system of communication had been so perfected that a man in his private house could communicate vocally with his butcher, baker, and candlestick-maker if he wished to do so, and as Skidmore Jumper was the owner of the finest building of French flats in the city, the canvassers naturally tried to secure his patronage, not only for his own benefit, but to encourage others to do the same thing.

Our landlord jumped at the idea. So did his various tenants, and finally the solicitor told them that they could all work on the same wire and thus make it come considerable cheaper. Mrs. Cutter could communicate with her customers; Miss Vestvalia could almost rehearse her parts by the aid of the telephone without bothering herself to go to the theater for rehearsals; Dr. Buck could prescribe for his patients without leaving his office, and, finally, Professor Grimshaw could proclaim his inventions to the world without going through the old-fashioned formula of advertising.

And, to tell the truth, Mr. Jumper and his whole family took to the new invention with much enthusiasm, even his mother-in-law condescending to regard it as one of the greatest and most convenient inventions of the age.

So the telephone was put up in the house, with an instrument on every floor or flat; the arrangement being that whenever one of the ten-

ants wished to communicate with any particular point, they must first alarm the main down town office, and tell the attendant there whom they wished to open conversation with, hundreds of people doing the same, and through this means being put into communication with friends and business relations.

In the course of a week the thing was arranged, and Jumper, being the first to use it after being placed by the operator in the central office in communication with Park & Tilford, ordered his day's groceries, wet and dry, with as much ease and accuracy as he could have done had he been in the store.

Then Dr. Buck communicated with one of his patients, and poisoned him just as well at a distance of three miles as he could have done had he been in the sick chamber.

Mrs. Cutter then tried it, and after exchanging compliments with one of her aristocratic customers, finally succeeded by telephone in taking her measure for a new dress (the material of which was sent an hour later), just as well as she could have done had the lady been present in her rooms.

Professor Grimshaw tried to get into communication with Mr. Edison, of Menlo Park, but so vehement was he in assuring him of a new discovery he had made in magneto electricity, and not succeeded in getting into *rappor*t with the distinguished inventor, he got mad and applied one of his electrical machines to the telephone and broke it all to pieces, besides knocking several people down who were using the various instruments at the time.

This produced a rupture which took a whole week to cure, but finally the lines got into working order again, without, however, any one knowing the cause of all the trouble, but all assigning it to a great stroke of lightning which happened to be nosing around at the moment in quest of some mischief to do.

But on the whole the telephone proved a great success, and a wonderful convenience, not only for the tenants of our landlord, but for all connected with the main office, although it must not be supposed that the great invention was at that time anywhere so near that standard of perfection that it is to-day.

Sometimes there would be trouble or a misunderstanding at the central office, and two or three points would be switched in communication at the same time, and then there would be all sorts of mistakes and mixtures made in the "speaking," some of them decidedly aggravating, and others as comical and ludicrous as could be imagined.

Now let it be remembered that Mrs. Scratcher took great interest in the wonderful invention, and in order to test it to its fullest capacity she would give all sorts of orders for the household, including groceries, coal, and drygoods.

One day, however, things were working badly at the central office, and nobody seemed to be getting in communication with those with whom they wish to, and a worse mixture of orders and confidential communications was never known.

Mrs. Scratcher was doing her best to tell Messrs. Park & Tilford that they must send up a certain quantity of provisions of various denominations, while somebody else was trying to tell Jones & Co. that they were frauds and had not sent them the drygoods ordered the day before, and at the same time there was somebody else trying to communicate with Wall street relating to stocks, and over and above all, the young lady who attended the switches of the different customers at the central office was carrying on a chaffing communication with some young fellow in a dry-goods store up town. In fact, there appeared to be all sorts of people, all trying to send different kinds of messages over the wires while the said chaffing was going on.

Mrs. Scratcher got the first "mixture," something resembling this—she having called Park & Tilford for sundry articles in the grocery line:

"Go to——" "Thunder, what's the matter with——" "Jumper's mother-in-law——" "Halloo—halloo——" "Oh, you naughty boy——" "Fool the old girl——" "Halloo, will you place me in communication with——" "Send those shirts we ordered yesterday, or——" "Halloo, I wish to converse with Mr. Jumper, please."

(This was a female voice and she was sure of it. Oh that horrid man!)

She listened with bated breath at this sort of jargon for a much as ten minutes, and most likely until the young lady at the "switch" in the main office had finished her little dialogue with her young man up town, when matters began to assume shape, and the various customers of the telephone went on with their communications without any difficulty, beyond that of each one having to wait his or her turn.

And so she ordered her groceries, but there was a cloud upon her brow and something big in her heart. What was the meaning of those allusions to Jumper and his mother-in-law; and what young lady was the proprietor of that voice that called for him?

It was a great mystery to her, for she did not know that the voice was that of the young lady at the central office, partially repeating an order which she had received from one of the salesmen at Park & Tilford's.

"I am certain that that man's conduct will drive me crazy," she muttered. "Oh! who would be a mother-in-law? Who would assume the awful responsibilities of looking out for a son-in-law who will bear watching?" and with her mouth firmly closed, she started to report the affair to her daughter.

And she succeeded in arousing her suspicions sufficiently to make her unhappy, after which she seemed to feel better, evidently regarding that as one of her "awful responsibilities."

Finally they "went for" poor Jumper, and demanded an explanation of the matter. He tried in vain to explain how it in all probability happened, but they would not listen to it; so he got mad and went out for a walk to cool off.

That afternoon there was an alarm from the central office, and Mrs. Scratcher flew to the instrument to find out what was wanted, for her's was a nature so great, that she could attend to everything—even the business of outsiders.

"Halloo—halloo!" was the first thing she heard, and then she shouted: "Halloo—halloo!" back again.

"Is that you, Mr. Jumper?"

Horror upon horror! It was a female voice as sure as she was alive, and she could scarcely find strength to answer back: "Yes," in a voice as much like Jumper's as possible.

"Did you fool the old woman?"

Heavens and earth! That meant her. Struggling for breath, she answered back: "Yes."

"Good! Glad of it. Good-by, Uncle Jumper! Ta—ta! Be good to your niece."

The communication was from that forward, mischievous vixen, Miss Kelsey, who, having accidentally discovered that Jumper had a telephone, thought she would tease him a bit, and so went to the store of one of her acquaintances and desired him to place her in communication with Mr. Jumper.

The old lady came near fainting, and before she could recover herself fairly, the connection had been switched, and she could find out nothing more about it.

"Was there ever such a terrible bad man as this Skidmore Jumper is? I now know that there is some dreadful mystery connected with him. Oh, I am sure of it! 'Did you fool the old woman?' I wonder what that means? Ah, I think I see a way to find out. He explained all about the workings of the telephone, and I will go down to the central office and see if I can find out what place was connected with us then. 'Fool the old woman,' indeed!" she fairly hissed.

CHAPTER V.

MR. JUMPER's mother-in-law, with all her good intentions swelling her heart, went to the central office of the telephone company, and tried her best to find out what station it was which was connected with them the day before, but she couldn't get the slightest satisfaction.

Then she returned home, and made it warm for her son-in-law, taking him at the dinner-table, in the presence of his wife and niece.

"And so you fooled the old woman, did you, Mr. Jumper?" was her first shot.

"Fooled who—what old woman?" he asked.

"Me, sir—*me!* your own wife's mother!"

"Well, I have always had too much respect for your sharpness to think for a moment that I could fool you, even if I wanted to."

"Indeed! Ah! I see through your irony, sir. Who is it that calls you 'Uncle Jumper?' Will you be kind enough to answer me *that?*"

"Why, Lucy, here, sometimes call me that. Why?" he asked, becoming at least interested, if not alarmed, at her manner.

"Did Lucy address you as 'Uncle Jumper' yesterday afternoon through the telephone?"

"Not that I know of. Why?"

"And did she asked you if you succeeded in fooling the old woman?"

"Not that I am aware of," said he, wonderingly.

"Well, sir, some young lady called you through the telephone yesterday afternoon late, and asked that question, and as I chanced to be near the machine, I answered in the affirmative for you, although it was a falsehood, and then she endearingly said: 'Good-bye; ta-ta! Be good to your niece.' What have you to say to that?"

"Simply that I don't believe it," replied Mr. Jumper, although he did, and instantly suspected the source, as did Lucy.

"Do you presume to say, sir, that I would tell a falsehood about it," she almost screamed.

"I think you would do almost anything to make it pleasant for me. This, however, is all nonsense, and if it came at all, was done as a joke by some one who probably knew that my nosing, mischief-making mother-in-law would be near at hand to hear it," said he, roused to a pitch of indignation.

"Indeed! A nice man *you* are, arn't you?"

"Too nice a one to have such a relation as I have got in you," he said.

"We shall see, sir—we shall see. There is a female connected with this business, and I shall yet succeed in finding out who she is, and in exposing your dreadful conduct," said she, very vigorously.

"I trust you will succeed in finding out everything that will make you happy, and your relations joyous over your existence."

Jumper actually flung this at her.

"Do you know, sir, that it requires at least one sharp woman to keep the run of the generality of married men?"

"Yes, and if it was not so charitable, I should wish that every married man on earth might have such a sharp and watchful mother-in-law as I have got; a woman who felt it incumbent upon her to mind everybody else's business but her own."

"Do you pretend to say, sir, that my daughter's happiness is not my business?"

"Perhaps it might be if she was not married, but being married, I don't think you have anything to say about the matter."

"Oh, you dreadful man!"

"I don't think Uncle Skidmore is a dreadful man at all," said Lucy, blushing.

"Miss Baggage, what do you know about it?" exclaimed Mrs. Scratcher, turning upon the girl.

"I know this, that Uncle Skidmore is my mother's brother, and I would much sooner believe him good than you," she replied, with spirit.

"Indeed! A nice, innocent country girl you are, to come to New York and take the part of a profligate."

"Why, mamma!" put in Mrs. Jumper.

"Hush, my child! You are young yet, and fond. Such women are easily deceived. I know more about him than you do!"

"Now *what* do you know about me?" demanded Mr. Jumper, savagely.

"Oh, I know more than you think I do."

"You know nothing against me; and if you will prove me one thing—one solitary thing that is in the least degrading to me, I will give you a thousand dollars," said he, emphatically.

"Perhaps I cannot prove it just now, but I shall most likely be able to do so before long."

"Then keep your mouth shut until you *do* get this dreadful proof of my iniquity, for I will not be insulted in my own house, and I will not have my relations—my *blood* relations—insulted by a female—a *female*—who is no relation to me."

"Good, Uncle Skidmore," put in Lucy,

"You are too forward, miss," said Mrs. Jumper, frowning at the girl!

"No, she is not," said Jumper.

"That is right. Go on! abuse me just as much as you like! I am only a poor woman, dependent upon your bounty," said Mrs. Scratcher, mopping her eyes for tears.

"Well, madame, if you recognize that to be the case, I should suppose that you would do a little more in the shape of attending to your own affairs and less to mine."

The indignant old lady did not wait to hear more or to reply to what she had already heard, but getting up from the table she flaunted from the room, followed soon after by her daughter, who muttered something about some brute or other trying to break her mother's heart.

"What does it all mean, Uncle Skidmore?" asked his niece, just as soon as they were left alone together.

"I know, Lucy, I know," said he, in a whisper.

"It was that confounded schoolmarm."

"Do you think so?"

"Oh, I am sure of it. She did it, just for the sake of teasing me. But, I know what I will do! I'll tear that confounded telephone out by the roots! I'll tear it all to pieces! I won't leave a nail mark in the infernal thing, no I won't," and he struck the table so severely with his fist that it made the glassware jingle, and Mary entered from the kitchen.

"Did ye ring, sur?"

"No, but I like to, though."

"I thought I hearn ye ringing something."

"I would like to wring something—something in the shape of an old woman's neck," replied Mr. Jumper, getting up from the table and leaving the room.

"More power ter ye, ould man! Faix I'm glad to sae him resentin' the ould heathin's divilment, so I am," said Mary.

"I think, myself that it is about time," said Lucy, looking towards the door.

"Sure, an' it's a dog's loife she's been a ladin' him iver since I came ter live wid 'em, an' I'm glad ter sae him up on ther bit."

This conversation does not need to be carried any further in order to show the feelings of either one of the girls toward the mother and her son-in-law. And it does not require much foresight to see that Lucy would surely come in now for all the love which overflowed from the hearts of both Mrs. Scratcher and Mrs. Jumper, seeing that she had sided with her uncle so strongly.

And so it was. The life of the poor girl was made miserable by little things; things about which she could scarcely complain to her uncle, because they seemed so trivial, but which made a mockery of pleasure forever more.

But night did not put up her shutters before Mr. Jumper had the telephone ripped from the bosom of his home and the eager ear of his mother-in-law, for when he did make up his mind to act, there was no mistake about it, and he had made up his mind about that invention, and also about forming any new acquaintances on the railroad on account of sympathy.

Of course Mrs. Scratcher had her say about the matter, and made several pleasing, pat quotations regarding the workings of a guilty conscience. But Jumper could afford to grin and bear it, feeling certain now that he had pulled up the roots of the mischief in that telephone.

But the other families who were enjoying life in French flats under Mr. Jumper's roof did not give up their instruments, perhaps because they had no mother-in-law, and nobody to attend to what was none of their business. No. Dr. Buck still consulted with patients (all but looking at their tongues) at a distance. Miss Vestvalia was still in quick and vocal communication with the theater where she performed. Mrs. Cutter could still gossip with her customers, and Professor Grimshaw still used the communicating wire to speak through or experiment upon—hoping to improve the telephone in some way—but the family of Mr. Jumper went back a few years, and again took up with old methods of communication. Jumper considered them safer, and not such a strain upon his mother-in-law.

But it was not long after these events that Professor Grimshaw got the notion into his head that he could revolutionize the whole business by a great improvement which he had studied out, and after working weeks over it, finally concluded to electrify and astonish a certain portion of the world, and more especially the stockholders in the new and wonderful invention, by attaching wires to those belonging to the company, and operating his improved machine without any further introduction.

This he did with varied results.

Boldly calling the central office, as he supposed, he got a reply.

"What do you want?" was the first question which came back to him, and it came back so loud and distinct that it made his heart leap to think of the great success of his invention. In fact, so overcome was he, that the question from somewhere had to be repeated before it roused him.

"How does she work?" he asked of the instrument.

"Can't tell yet, but she seems to be a pretty good washer," came the reply.

Grimshaw started back in astonishment. Did they take his invention for a washing-machine?

He called again after the lapse of a few minutes.

"I say! Do you see any improvement in the vocal arrangement?"

"No. Tell her to take those pills I send her."

"Good gracious! what do they mean by that. I wonder? What have pills to do with the vocal arrangements of a telephone, I would like to know! I say, does it work any better than it did?" he called again.

"Who the deuce are you?" some one called.

"Professor Grimshaw."

"Who?"

"Professor Grimshaw."

"Oh, go to blazes!" came in a disgusted tone. Grimshaw started back in surprise.

"Ah! I see it! They know me and are afraid of me and my improvement. But I will make them acknowledge me and my claims to greatness."

So he called again.

"Well?" came in a female voice this time.

"Can you hear plainly?"

"Splendidly. What do you wish?"

"Where is the manager?"

"At the theater, I suppose."

"What theater?"

"His own, of course."

"You don't understand me."

"Yes I do. What is up?"

"I have made a great improvement."

"In what? What part do you play?"

"The inventor."

"What, are you in 'Our Boarding House' Where?"

"No—no, I am in Mr. Jumper's French flat house, fifth floor."

"Bah!" came like a clincher, and then all was silent for a moment.

But Grimshaw's wire cut off everybody in the house from the main office, and it was not long before his instrument announced a call, and he at once went to attend to it.

"Well?" he asked, calculating upon further testing his wonderful improvement.

"Put me in communication with Mrs. Pease."

What the dickens did that mean? What had he to do with Mrs. Pease? Suddenly the thought occurred to him that somebody at the central office wished to test his improvement, and also wishing to do the same thing, he answered back, "All right," after which he got the following:

"Please give me your bust measure; and do you wish to have it low-necked and short sleeved? I shall make the train half a yard longer than we were speaking of, for a very low person that I know, a Mrs. Jumper, has got one as long as we talked about. Now hurry, please."

Goodness gracious! What was all this about?

But while he stood wondering about it, there came another call, which he answered as before.

"Switch me to No. — Fifth avenue."

"All right," he answered, hoping to get some solution to the mixture of the voices and calls.

Then there was another call, and placing his mouth to the machine he asked what was wanted.

"Tell Mrs. Birch that she may have a little broiled chicken for lunch, but tell her to be sure to swallow one of the powders both before and after, that is all. Good-day."

"Well, if that didn't beat snakes!"

And all day long there was a confused mass of loud but curious questions being asked in answer to the calls, and finally he became confused himself, and the other owners of telephones in the building got mad and sent post haste for the superintendent, for the purpose of blowing him up on account of the manner in which the business at the main office was being conducted lately.

The superintendent assured them that nobody else was complaining, and then proceeded to call the operator at the main office.

"I say, is that you?" he asked.

"Yes," replied Grimshaw.

"Well, what the mischief is the matter with you?"

"I have made a great improvement in the telephone."

"Well, I am Mr. Smithers, and if you don't stop fooling with people in this building I shall proceed to make an improvement in the business by discharging you. Do you understand that?"

"You can't discharge me, sir, if you are Smithers."

Here he proceeded to blow up and discharge an innocent person, a man who happened to be in charge of the switches at the time, but who protested, and called witnesses to prove that no communication had been held with the French flats for two days.

Then the worried and bothered official went back for further investigation, and, going up to Grimshaw's floor, he found him deep in labor with his telephone.

"How does your instrument work?" he asked.

"Finely, sir; wonderfully well, and I may safely say that it is a great improvement."

"What is?"

"Look here," and he proceeded to explain things.

But the official soon discovered the cause of all the trouble, and tearing down the professor's connection, he told him that if he interfered again in any manner with the telephone, he would take out his telephone and prosecute him for damages.

What a commentary on genius!

What a satire on American progression!

According to his idea it amounted to nothing, only jealousy. Were he not an inventor there would be no trouble.

The telephone company were afraid of him, and that settled it!

Oh, jealousy, where is thy sting? oh, genius, where is thy victory? or sentiments which amount to about the same thing.

But that ended Grimshaw's experiments on improving the telephone. Capital was plainly arrayed against genius, and being a man of only ordinary means, what show had he against it?

His wife sympathized with him, of course, as she always did, and finally persuaded him to have no more to do with it, but to strike out on some new invention or discovery, which she was sure he could do, and in this way make the haughty holders of capital bow before him.

He concluded to make them bow, and so we will leave him for the time being and return to our landlord and his family.

As hinted at some paragraphs back, Mrs. Scratcher and her daughter made it so unexceptionally lively for Mr. Jumper's niece, owing to the fact that she took her uncle's part, that she was forced to change her quarters.

But she did not return home. Oh, no! Her uncle would not allow of that, because it would make the victory of his mother-in-law all the more pronounced, but he quietly made arrangements with Mrs. Cutter, the dressmaker and milliner, who occupied the fourth flat, to take his niece as a boarder, which allowed her to still continue her studies, and at the same time be near her uncle.

This arrangement made a muss, but Mr. Jumper got his back up and squelched it,

making it a thing to be particularly understood that if anything more was said about it, that there would be a vacant mother-in-law-ship in the family, and no mistake.

And so things stood, neither his wife or her mother daring to make an open attack; but in the meantime he became so perfectly reconciled to his wife that they actually went to places of amusement together, although Mrs. Scratcher was on all occasions left behind to guard the house.

Well, the writer, a member of this numerous French flat household at the time, remembers one sensation which perhaps may as well come in at this time as any other.

Mr. Jumper and his wife had enjoyed one of their usual spats, worked up by his mother-in-law, and they had retired with the matter only about half made up, although he was leaning more than half way over to a perfect reconciliation.

But soon after retiring, Jumper experienced stronger than ever the annoyance which had worried him for three hours, and ever since the barber had shaved him, that of a pricking, burning sensation on his face, occasioned by being shaved too close, and it annoyed him exceedingly.

Finally, he bethought him that a little vaseline rubbed over his face would quiet the smarting and irritation, but not knowing just where it was to be found, although he knew it was in the house, he asked his wife.

"I say, birdie?"

"What is it?" she asked, half asleep.

"Where is that bottle of vaseline?"

"Wha—for?"

"My face smart. Where is it?"

"Inner closet—onner shelf," said she, now more than half asleep, and with no idea what the article was wanted for.

Jumper got up, and without lighting the gas, he proceeded to grope around in the closet where several odd articles were kept, all the while feeling sure that he knew about where it was, and what sort of a bottle it was kept in.

Finally he came upon a bottle which he seemed to recognize by the feeling of it, and, taking out the cork, he proceeded to rub his face all over with it, and as it somehow soothed it, as he felt confident it would, he continued to rub it from his neck and chin, clear up to where his hair commenced to grow on the top of his head, after which, feeling better, he retired to rest.

Oh, what bliss, the sleep of the weary!

Mr. Jumper slept the sleep of the just, but his wife was troubled with all sorts of horrid dreams, owing to an overdose of pork chops which she took for supper the night before, and one of her dreams, or rather one of her nightmares, was that Jumper had left her, and had married the widow Cutter, while she was, by some strange means, transformed into the wife of a negro.

She went from one of those somnambulistic ecstasies to another, and, between the acts, Jumper was kicked most unmercifully, although being used to it, he paid scarcely attention enough to it to waken, or even grunt.

But morning came at last, and as its first streaks began to struggle through the shutters, Mrs. Jumper aroused from her uneasy slumber, and, naturally enough, took a look at her snoring spouse, if only to make sure that what she had encountered in her sleep was only a dream—that her husband was still with her.

Horror upon horrors had accumulated!

She arose to a sitting posture, and took another look, uttered a little scream, and then took another look to make sure.

Then she gave vent to a full-grown yell, and, leaped from the bed, arousing her husband, of course.

"Help—help! police—police!" she yelled.

Her husband arose up on end in the bed, and scarcely awakened, and seeing his wife crouching in a far corner of the room and yelling like a wild Indian or an untuned calliope, he naturally enough wanted to know what the matter was.

"Help—help! police—police!" she shouted.

"What the deuce is the matter with you, Mrs. Jumper? Be quiet. What ails you?"

"Help—help!"

"What is the matter? What help do you want?"

"Oh, you horrid thing, get out of my room!"

"She's going out of her head," mused Mr. Jumper, and then he slowly approached her.

"Go away—go away!" she yelled.

"Be quiet, my dear, you—"

"Oh, will help never come? Help—help!"

"What ails you, my darling? Did you have a horrid dream?" he asked, soothingly.

"Oh, keep away or I will jump out of the window! Help—help—help!"

By this time the house was aroused and people began to gather near Mr. Jumper's room, and among them was his mother-in-law.

"Oh, I am sure he is murdering her!" she exclaimed, in tones of anguish. "Burst open the door and rescue my poor darling, quick!" she cried.

Dr. Buck and Professor Grimshaw were among the masculines assembled, and, together with the writer, we threw ourselves against the door and burst it open.

What a sight met our gaze.

There stood Jumper in his night clothes with his face as black as the ace of spades, and in the corner, crouching out of reach, was his poor wife, frightened half out of her wits.

"Help—help!" she cried, and recognizing her mother, she flew to her arms.

"Oh, my darling, what is it?" she asked.

"That horrid man—I found him in my bed. Take him away—take him away!"

"Send for a policeman!"

"What's the matter with you all?" demanded Mr. Jumper, turning upon them.

"Who are you?" asked Dr. Buck, approaching him.

"Why, who should I be?"

"You should be Mr. Jumper, being found here in this condition, but—"

"Why, so I am Mr. Jumper. What is the matter with you all, that's what I would like to know."

"What, are you really Mr. Jumper?"

"Of course I am. Can't you see?"

"No, I'll be hanged if I can," replied the doctor.

"No—no, he is not Jumper at all, but some horrid man whom he has admitted to her chamber in the hope of getting a divorce from her. Oh, I know the horrid creature," said Mrs. Scratcher.

"Confound you all! what is the matter? Have you all gone crazy?" cried Jumper.

"No; but if you are Jumper you must have done so."

"What do you mean?"

"Look in the glass!"

"Look in the glass?" he asked, turning towards it, and by the light which had now become quite strong, he saw a reflection which almost paralyzed him.

Starting back, he uttered an expression of horror and dismay.

"What does this mean?"

"We give it up," replied Dr. Buck.

"How came I so?"

"I will tell you," said Professor Grimshaw; "for in my experience and reading, I have heard of many cases wherein the cuticle has turned black in a very short space of time."

"Bah!" put in the doctor. "What nonsense!"

"I will argue the case with you, Dr. Buck, and take you right up-stairs to my library, where I can produce the proofs," said the professor.

"Nonsense!"

Mr. Jumper, meanwhile, stood like one in a dream.

"I say, Mr. Jumper, if you are really Mr. Jumper, as I think you are, have you put anything on your face lately?" asked the doctor.

"No—that is, nothing but some vaseline last night," replied Mr. Jumper.

His wife started up from her mother's embrace.

"Vaseline! Where did you get it?"

"On the shelf in that closet."

"Let me see it."

Jumper proceeded to the closet, and taking the bottle, which he remembered well, he handed it to the doctor.

"Vaseline—vaseline! Bixby's liquid shoe blacking!" exclaimed the doctor, holding up the bottle.

"Great Moses!" breathed Jumper, gazing at it in wild-eyed astonishment.

"Liquid blacking instead of vaseline!"

This created a laugh, but in which Professor Grimshaw did not join, as it knocked his theory in the head, and left him quite as much an object of ridicule as was Jumper himself.

"Well, that is the worst I ever knew!"

"Will it come off?" moaned Jumper.

"Try soap and water on it."

He did so, and presently appeared in his normal condition again, after which the terrified inmates of his house retired to their rooms laughing, and leaving poor Jumper to the mercy of his wife and mother-in-law.

Poor Jumper!

CHAPTER VI.

It was several days before poor Mr. Jumper heard the last of his vaseline experience, and even for a month afterwards everybody whom he met, and with whom he was acquainted, seemed to have a settled grin upon their faces.

His mother-in-law smiled like one who had enjoyed a triumph, and his wife looked as though something particularly funny had happened to somebody.

Of course it was not long before his tenants got hold of it, and everybody appeared to be wound up and set to a grin, and as his acquaintances all over the city heard of it, one after another, he would most likely have heard from them by telephone, had he not had the instrument torn from his house.

But Mr. Jumper took it good-naturedly after awhile, and laughed over it considerably, although it is safe to say that he felt happy at the extreme probability of that schoolmarm's knowing nothing at all about the matter.

He would sometimes wonder what had become of that provoking creature, and if she would cause him any further trouble, and it is safe to say that his mother-in-law was quite as anxious about the, to her, mysterious person as he was himself.

It was not long afterwards, however, before he was astonished at receiving the following letter:

"MY DEAR OLD UNCLE:—You have no idea of how lonesome I am without seeing you; I have waited and waited ever so long, hoping to hear from you, and now I have become almost desperate over what appears to be cruel neglect on your part, and shall call and see you some day this week. From your loving niece,

"BELLA KELSEY."

If somebody had hit him on the head with a frozen cabbage, it would scarcely have stunned him any more than this letter did.

"Confound her impudence! Who ever heard of such a bronze cheek? Coming to see me? Hang me if I don't believe that it is a piece of blackmail. She doubtless thinks that she can frighten me into giving her money. And this is what I got for assisting her in the most friendly and disinterested manner; I found her in Chicago without a cent, and, moved by her tears, I paid her passage to New York out of my own pocket, and treated her just as I could wish to have a man treat my own daughter if he found her in like circumstances. Hang me if I ever do a good act again in my life," said he, savagely.

Now to tell the truth, Miss Kelsey had no idea of calling upon him in the manner mentioned, or in any other, but that made no difference to Jumper. He believed she intended to do it, and it nearly drove him crazy, while she wrote the letter just to tease him a bit; although it would take some one more deeply versed in the lore of the female human heart than the author is, to say for a certainty that she was not a little piqued at discovering that he was a married man, or to what extent that pique, if it really existed, influenced her in her mischief.

"By the great horn spoon! What is to be

done?" he muttered, tearing the note into minute fragments. "I'll take a trip to Boston; I've long wanted to go there on business. No, by Jove, that wouldn't do, unless I take my wife and mother-in-law along with me, for they would be sure to see her if she called, and then my fat would all be in the fire. What the mischief shall I do? I know. I'll hang out a yellow flag and make her believe that there is small-pox in the house. No, that will not do, either, for that would frighten everybody out of the building, and perhaps the Board of Health would actually think I had the malady, and hustle me off to the hospital, or to a lunatic asylum. Oh, dear—oh, dear, I verily believe that this female *will* drive me into one. How shall I escape her? Hark!" and hearing the front door bell ring, he thought that perhaps it was her, and he rushed to open it before anybody else could answer it.

But it was only a sewing-machine agent who wanted to talk to somebody regarding the merits of his machine.

"I don't want a sewing-machine," said Jumper, making a move to close the door.

"But somebody in the house might, though, replied the agent, placing his foot in such a way as to prevent the door being closed.

"No, sir, nobody in the house wants one."

"Now perhaps you do not know the wants of every person in this house, and more than likely you have never heard of the wonderful merits and performances of this machine," he persisted.

"No, and I don't wish to."

"But every American especially desires to know of all the great improvements."

"Hang your improvements!" replied Mr. Jumper, fast losing his patience.

"But you say so unthinkingly and without sufficient enlightenment regarding this particular machine. I can safely say that it is the most perfect sewing-machine ever made by mortal man."

"I have given you my answer, sir."

"But allow me to show you some of its wonderful performances."

"No, sir, I tell you."

"It will sew the toughest and thickest fabrics as well as the most gauzy."

"I don't care if it does."

"It will sew with the thread of a spider-web and with the stoutest waxed-end in making boots, shoes, and harness."

"I don't believe it."

"Good! give me a chance to prove it."

"No, I'll be hanged if I do."

"I have the machine right here in my carriage."

"All right; go out and get in with it, and then drive away."

"But I tell you it will do wonders."

"Can it tell a bigger lie than you can?"

"No, but it can be used to shingle and clap-board houses with—using wire instead of thread, and firmly stitching them upon the walls!" replied the agent, looking Mr. Jumper straight in the eye.

"You don't say so!"

"Fact; let me show you."

"All right; bring it in."

"Good! It will only take me a moment," he replied, turning towards his carriage.

"I'll bet it will take you more than a minute," growled Jumper, banging the door shut.

That agent paused, and looked back at the door which had been shut upon him.

"All right, old man, but I'll make you examine my machine yet," saying which he drove away, leaving our landlord with a temporary triumph to his score.

But of course Jumper was not happy even at that bit of luck. The fear that that confounded schoolmarm would be the next caller kept him in a continual state of anxiety.

At length, however, he struck a highly-polished idea, a way whereby he could get both his wife and her mother out of the house for a shorter or longer time, according to how deeply they got interested in the idea.

Well, this brilliant idea of Jumper's was to make both his wife and mother-in-law a present of a new silk dress, telling them to go to Arnold & Constable's and select whatever suited them, and have the bill sent to him.

They jumped at the proposal as pickerels jump at tempting frogs, and, greatly to his delight, he saw them at once commence to get ready for their shopping excursion, all the while thinking, however, what could have come across Jumper to cause this sudden burst of liberality.

But they finally started, and Mr. Jumper wiped the perspiration from his head.

"Thank goodness," he muttered. "Now let that confounded schoolmarm come if she dares to, and I'll hustle her into the street and have her arrested, the impudent hussy. Oh! why don't she come? I want to see her before they return—I *must* see her before they return—confound her, why don't she come when I want her to and not when I don't want her to?" and with clenched fists he walked up and down the parlor floor. "Now, isn't this just like a woman?" he asked himself, after gazing out of the window for a moment. "They are sure to be on the contrary side."

And so he fumed about the house for two hours, rushing to the front door every time the bell would ring, but only to be disappointed every time.

Finally his wife and mother returned and the jig was up. Then, of course, he did not wish she would come, but he did some very hard thinking regarding matters and things.

The next day he contrived to get them out in the afternoon for the purpose of buying each a new hat, but still his personal torment did not come, and evening brought back his wife and delighted mother-in-law.

By this time he had worked himself up to almost insanity, and after dinner he went to the office of a morning paper where he wrote and inserted the following "Personal."

"MISS KELSEY:—Don't you dare to come to my house. UNCLE JUMPER."

That he thought might possibly settle the business, although there was still the provoking uncertainty as to whether she read that particular morning paper, and whether she would ever see it.

And so after all he was but a trifle more easy in his mind, and again, during his temporary absence she might go to his house.

Almost maddened at the thought he hurried back again, but of course all was serene. For a whole week poor Jumper was kept on thorns and nettles, during which no person in the house had to attend to the door bell; he did it all.

But he finally came to the conclusion that the "personal" had frightened her, and that the great danger had passed.

Then again did our landlord become happy, even not regretting the presents he had made to his wife and mother-in-law, and, in fact, every person under his roof seemed to be happy and contented with the world and the fortunes it bestowed.

Mrs. Scratcher, ever since receiving the new silk from her son-in-law, had been a model mother-in-law, although to tell the truth, she was still in search of the cause of his sudden and unexpected generosity, unless she could eventually settle it in her mind that he had made the presents for the purpose of patching up a truce between them, because of her being too smart for him.

At all events, she accepted that as the reason until she might succeed in finding a better one, and was kept busy for the next week or two with the dressmaker whom they employed by the day to work in the house. Of course she did not employ Mrs. Cutter, not she. She hated the widow because she had given shelter to Miss Snell, thus keeping her still under the same roof.

But on the whole the old angel behaved herself very well, although after she got her new dress made she paid even more attention to the sewing circle, composed of the members of the church she and her daughter attended, than ever before, making its doings the subject of conversation continually, and especially at meal times, and this disgusted Mr. Jumper almost beyond bounds.

"What do you think, Skidmore?" said his wife to him one day soon after.

"About what?" he asked.

"The sewing circle is going to meet here the next time."

"The——"

"Well, that is a nice expression," put in his mother-in-law, laying down her knife and fork and looking supremely shocked.

"I didn't say anything."

"But you were going to."

"How do you know I was?"

"I could see it in your face."

"Bah!"

"But what objections have you to having our sewing circle meet here?" asked his wife.

"Because I object to encouraging gossip."

"Gossip!" they both exclaimed.

"Yes, gossip; I dare you to show any good they do any one, living or dead. They are one of the greatest social nuisances in existence."

"Nuisances, sir."

"Yes, just that. The old tattlers of the church get together and swap gossip and scandals. From what I have observed I verily believe they ruin more characters and create more trouble and dissension in churches than any other cause in the world. They are composed of a lot of busybodies who are forever tired of attending to their own business, and never tired of attending to that of other people; and what is more——"

"There, that will do," said his wife, sternly.

"The sewing circle will meet here the day after to-morrow, and if you don't like it, you can absent yourself from the house during the meeting."

"Which I shall most certainly do, madam."

"Very well. Let that settle it."

"Now I wouldn't let him do anything of the kind," said his mother-in-law.

"You wouldn't?" he sneered.

"No, sir, I would not."

"Oh, let him go if he wants to. There is nothing sociable about him, you know."

"But after he has slandered the circle in such an outrageous manner, I would insist upon his remaining at home and becoming acquainted with the noble ladies composing it, that he may see how little truth there is in his assertions."

"I don't wish to become acquainted with any more of them than I now know."

"I suppose that was intended as a fling at us?"

Mr. Jumper made no reply.

"And as for being old women, as you have often suggested, the members are fully one half young and beautiful girls," said his wife.

"Well, I am satisfied; I don't care how young or how old they are."

"Nonsense, Skidmore," replied his mother-in-law, about half smiling.

"What do you mean?"

"Oh, I know you are not so much unlike all other gentlemen of your age as all that means. Supposing you thought the dashing actress, or the lively Widow Cutter and some of her finely dressed girls were to be here—I guess you would remain."

"They have got too much good sense to help make up such a party. Besides, they have their own business, and take more interest in it than they do in the affairs of other people."

"Oh, they are exceedingly nice in your estimation, I know. But I can assure you that there will be ladies quite as attractive, and those more like Cæsar's wife, to fill the parlor. Besides, we have several new members, all of them young and attractive ladies."

"Learning to cackle, I suppose, like young pullets," said Jumper.

"No, sir, learning to sew."

"Sew what?"

"To sew for the poor."

"Heaven help the poor!"

"And to do good, sir."

"To whom?"

"Those in need of it. No, I will wager that you was never in a sewing circle in your life."

"Well, to tell the truth, I never was."

"Then, why condemn them?"

"Because of what I have heard, and because I have never seen any practical good arising from them."

"Naturally enough, because you have all the while known nothing about them, or their workings," suggested Mrs. Jumper.

"Well, perhaps so."

"Oh, I guess he will stay for a little while, at all events," said the old lady, coaxingly.

"Some of the ladies will impress you into the knitting brigade."

"What the dickens is that?"

"Oh, you will see if you remain."

To this our landlord made no reply, and as the dinner was about over the subject was dropped, with a virtual conquest for wife and mother.

After thinking it over for some time, feeling that he would like to see what sort of a lot a sewing circle was composed of, he finally made up his mind to remain at home and satisfy his curiosity on the point.

Now it must be remembered that Mr. Jumper, in spite of his natural honesty, had a share of interest in all good-looking ladies, especially if they were young, and as he would, of course, become acquainted with them in his own house and through the agency of his wife and her mother, he concluded that not the slightest harm could come from it.

So on the morning of the day on which the circle was to be holden, a close observer might have noticed that he took more than ordinary pains with his toilet, and bloomed—while still seeming indifferent—like a freshly plucked dandelion blossom.

The business connected with his French flats occupied the most of his time during the forenoon, but at the appointed hour for the convention of sewing women "in the good cause," he was wholly disengaged and waiting for events.

One by one and in couples they came, until the magnificent parlor was almost full.

Jumper was outside, or somewhere, waiting for somebody to introduce him to the church-sewing circle.

Finally his wife remembered him, and came out into the sitting-room where he sat, pretending to read a paper.

"Now, darling, you must come in and be introduced to the company," said she.

"Nonsense," said he, although he really was anxious for it.

"Oh, come along; they will not harm you."

"But you know how bashful I am."

"Well, that's nothing. I want you to become acquainted with the ladies of our sewing circle, for I am sure you will like them," said she.

"All right. I am a lamb. Lead me on to the slaughter," he said, getting up.

"Slaughter! Now, Skidmore, you know that nothing pleases me more than to have you looked upon by my own set as one of the best and finest in the land. Come!"

"Well, go ahead," said he, with a sigh.

"Oh, I am sure you will enjoy it."

"I hope so; but——"

"Come along and try."

She took her husband's arm and escorted him into the parlor, where were assembled about fifty ladies, some old, some medium, and a few who might be called young.

"This is my husband, Mr. Jumper," said she, presenting him.

Jumper bowed all around the room. He bowed to everything in the room, and even went so far as to bow to a bust of Psyche, that stood on a beautiful pedestal.

But at first he could not discriminate between the females who occupied his parlor, and taking it for granted that they were all lovely and resplendent, he seated himself in a corner near his mother-in-law and panted.

His natural modesty forbade him from taking an inspection, and all ill at ease, he talked with his wife's mother and tried to appear happy.

"Now, what do you think?" she asked.

"I—I don't know," he stammered.

"But don't you think there are some very beautiful ladies present?"

"Yes," said he, without looking over the lot at all.

"Now, Skidmore, allow me to introduce you to some of our new members," she added, taking him by the arm.

"N—no; I don't care for it," said he.

"Oh, but you must. They all know you as one of the rich men of New York."

"But I don't want to be known as one of the rich men of New York."

"Too late! They know you. Allow me to present you to them."

"Oh, Lord!" he moaned, as his mother-in-law lifted him by the arm.

"Come right along! There is no occasion for you being so bashful. Ah! Miss Walsh, allow me to introduce you to Mr. Jumper, my son-in-law," said she, approaching the first one.

"Ah! delighted," said Jumper, scarcely knowing where he was, or what he said.

"And this is Miss Graves, also a new member of our circle."

"Thanks," was Jumper's only greeting.

"I am proud to make your acquaintance," replied a thin specimen of femininity.

"Ah—don't apologize! I—it's as much my fault—that is—it's as much my fault as yours. Thank you," said he, confusedly.

"And last, though not least, here is another of the new members of our sewing circle, a new and valuable one. Miss Kelsey, my son-in-law, Mr. Jumper."

Jumper jumped!

That name!

Was he ruined?

Was it a conspiracy?

Cautiously he glanced at her while saying the usual and requisite number of soft nothings which a man is supposed to get off when introduced to a young lady.

"Mr. Jumper, I am delighted," he heard, at the same time recognizing her voice.

"Ah—er—thanks. Fine evening; looks as though it might snow," said he, becoming very much agitated.

"I think you are really weather-wise, Mr. Jumper, or otherwise," she added, with a low, tantalizing laugh.

Mr. Jumper was perfectly paralyzed.

How came this pest of his life to belong to the sewing circle, and how dared she come to his house!

The conundrum was too gigantic for him.

But before anything further could be said, his mother-in-law drew him away to some other part of the room, and introduced him to other ladies belonging to the circle.

But he had not long been in the room before he discovered that he was in the realms of gossip. Various members of the circle were not only swapping gossip, but they were bringing in the names of young ladies and gentlemen connected directly or indirectly with the church, and giving them such a sifting that a grain of mustard-seed would have had hard work to get through their standard sieve.

But that wasn't Jumper's trouble now. Their gossip fell upon him as water falls on the back of a duck; but how about that awful school-marm?

What brought her there, anyhow?

"Blackmail," said he to himself. "She is determined to ruin me. Oh, why did I ever befriend her? Wonder how much would buy her off, anyhow?"

While cogitating thus, his mother-in-law came again to the front with a skein of yarn.

"Mr. Jumper, you have been impressed into the knitting brigade, just as I said."

"Oh, dear—well, what have I got to do? I can't knit."

"No; but you can hold yarn."

"What?"

"Here, I will show you" said she, taking a skein of yarn and placing it upon his hands in the old-fashioned way.

Mr. Jumper sat down and held the skein as his mother-in-law directed, but, oh! was there ever a more miserable man in the world than he was?

"Wonder how much will buy her off? Oh! I will never do another charitable act so long as I live," he mused, hardly daring to glance at her.

"Hold your hands up higher," said Mrs. Scratcher, and Jumper, in his discomfiture, held them away above his head.

"Not so high. What is the matter with you?"

"I—I don't understand it," moaned Jumper.

"I will show him, Mrs. Scratcher," said a musical voice, and forward came Miss Kelsey.

"Oh, Lord!" groaned poor Mr. Jumper.

"That is very good of you, Miss Kelsey. He used to know how to hold a skein of yarn, but I fear the number of bright eyes concentrated upon him now rather disconcerts him."



"HOLD YOUR HANDS UP HIGHER," SAID MRS. SCRATCHER, AND JUMPER, IN HIS DISCOMFORTURE, HELD THEM AWAY ABOVE HIS HEAD.

"Oh, undoubtedly. But I will show him. Here, Mr. Jumper, or will you excuse me if I call you *Uncle Jumper*?"

"Oh, Lord!" and he was almost ready to faint.

"Here; hold your hands up like this," she added, placing him in position and holding his hands in such a way as to enable a person to wind the yarn into a ball from the skein.

Our landlord thought he would certainly break all to pieces during the "showing."

"There, that is something like it," said the mother-in-law, now wholly good-natured, and with her company face on.

Jumper held the skein and allowed her to wind, while he was almost on the verge of madness.

"Ah! Uncle Jumper, I see you can be made very useful at our circles, and I think we will make you a member in full standing," said that awfully tantalizing schoolmarm.

"Y-yes, thank you," he stammered.

"There is nothing like having a useful man about, even though he be married," she said, with a merry ripple of laughter which he knew only too well.

"I wonder how much it will take to buy off this terrible female? Oh! I will never do a friendly act again in my life," mused Jumper, while the perspiration dropped from his face.

"Careful, Uncle Jumper," said Miss Kelsey.

"Oh, Lord!"

Mrs. Scratchter suddenly concluded that this Miss Kelsey was a trifle "too familiar," and noticing the agony of her son-in-law, she began to gather her wits and concentrate them upon this new member of the sewing circle.

CHAPTER VII.

POOR Mr. Jumper! He was in a terrible position. In fact, he was in a regular sweat-box.

Miss Kelsey, the young lady who had made him so much trouble, was actually in his house, in connection with the church sewing-circle, of which she was a new member, and she had thus far proved herself to be deliberately mischievous, and was giving our poor landlord heaps of uneasiness.

Mrs. Scratchter was winding a ball of yarn from a skein which Mr. Jumper held on his hands, and Miss Kelsey was instructing him how to hold it, when Mrs. Scratchter's suspicions became aroused, and she resolved to choke her off, or, at least, to inform her that Mr. Jumper was a married man.

And then she got another start. Where had she seen that face before?

Mr. Jumper noticed all this, and while wondering to himself how much this mischievous schoolmarm whom he had befriended would take in ready money to release him, Mrs. Scratchter was trying to connect her with something.

"Mrs. Scratchter, don't you think we had better make Mr. Jumper a full member of our circle?" she asked, archly.

Poor Jumper was "full" enough already.

"Well, I don't know. Do you think we could make him useful?" asked the mother-in-law, assuming her company face.

"Oh, I am certain of it. See what an elegant reel he makes, and there is no knowing what other matters he might be made useful in."

"Ah! I am afraid not; Mr. Jumper is so exceedingly bashful in company that I am almost certain it would spoil his usefulness."

"What, is Mr. Jumper afraid of the ladies? Well, I never should have thought it."

"Why, see how red he is in the face even in your presence," said she, watching them both closely, although pretending to be lightly chaffing.

"Oh, you are not afraid of the ladies, are you, Uncle Jumper?" said the vixen, coaxingly.

"No—that is—no, I—I feel perfectly at ease in their company," he stammered.

"Of course you do, and if I thought you did not I would kiss you just to break you of your bashfulness," replied the pretty blonde tease.

"Miss Kelsey, you are, I suppose, aware of the fact that Mr. Jumper is a married man," said Mrs. Scratchter, with terrible dignity.

"Oh, certainly, but would it be any worse for

me to kiss him than it would be for him to kiss me?"

"Oh! Lord, it is all coming out now," groaned Jumper.

"Not a whit, only from the fact that young ladies are supposed to be more modest than gentlemen."

"You are undoubtedly right, Mrs. Scratchter, but what I was going to say is—"

"Excuse me, ladies, I—I will return presently," said Jumper, laying down the skeins of yarn and bowing himself out of the room.

A merry laugh followed him.

"How very bashful he is," said Miss Kelsey.

"Well, miss, it would look better in you if you possessed more of it," said Mrs. Scratchter.

"Oh, undoubtedly; I beg pardon; but I do so like to tease a bashful person."

"Have you ever met Mr. Jumper before?" asked the old lady, looking her straight in the eye.

"Oh, yes, at church often, and I always thought what fun it would be to tease him," she replied, without becoming in the least embarrassed.

Mrs. Scratchter regarded her a moment as if trying to make up her mind whether to believe her or not.

"Well, Miss Kelsey, so long as Mr. Jumper is a married man, I think it would look much better in you—or, at least more ladylike—if you should forego your amusement, especially when you see that it is very annoying."

"To whom, pray?"

"Well, if not to him, then to his wife and mother-in-law," said she, sharply.

"Oh!" and with a mocking laugh she went to rejoin her group of young ladies, leaving the old lady in a huff and a quandary.

"I'll see about this," she muttered, between her clenched teeth, as she got up to follow Mr. Jumper.

Going into the sitting-room she did not find him, and from there to the dining-room, and into the kitchen with no better success.

Mary O'Callahan, the servant girl, was at work there, however, and of her she asked:

"Did Mr. Jumper come out here?"

"Sure, an' he did."

"Where has he gone?"

"How should I know? He seemed ter be in great trouble, an' ther sweat war a drippin' from his face, just loike fat from a roasting goose."

"Well, what did he do?"

"Troth, he just held his head under the hydrant an' let the wather run on it a minute, an' then hastily wipin' it, he caught up his hat and cut out of doors as though his mother-in-law was after him, so he did."

"You impudent thing, how dare you speak like that to me?"

"Faix, an' I'm niver ashamed ter speak ther truth, so I amn't. Put that in yer dudeen an' smoke it," she replied, with haughty independence.

"I shall see that you are turned out of this house, mark that."

"No yer won't—yer not my boss."

"We'll see about that."

"Nor yer daughter, either."

"What is that you say?"

"I've only one boss in this shanty, an' that's Mr. Jumper. He'll not discharge me, moind that."

"Mercy on me!" exclaimed the old woman, almost struck aghast at her assurance.

"Begorra, but I think he'd raise my wages if he thought I raised ther divil wid you."

"Oh! oh! oh!" screamed she, turning and flying from the room, followed by a loud and tantalizing laugh from Mary.

"Ther divil fly 'way wid yer! Ye'll not boss me around as ye do ther others," she muttered.

It was fully five minutes before Mrs. Scratchter could compose herself and get on her company face again, so as to enable her to return to the sewing circle, and even then it did not set entirely smooth.

What a poor unhappy creature she was! There was not only some of somebody's business that she could not find out, but she had actually been snubbed and insulted by the servant.

With the best grace she could muster she

tried to be agreeable to the company and to enter into the general conversation, but whenever she looked in the direction of that mischievous blonde beauty, Bella Kelsey, she encountered a glance which almost upset her again and nearly caused her to forget her Christian grace.

There was something wrong about that young lady, and she knew it; but how was she to prove it? For a few moments she entertained the thought of placing a detective on her track, but she finally abandoned that as not only dangerous but expensive. Besides, she was well known by influential members of the church and sewing circle, by whose influence she had been made a member, and to question them regarding her character would be to insult them seriously.

And so she pondered and puzzled her brain to find a clew to her familiar conversation with her son-in-law, as well as his manifest confusion in her presence. He had never acted so strangely in the presence of a young lady before, not even before her daughter while courting her, and she felt certain that there was something wrong somewhere.

But before the sewing circle broke up she had decided upon a course of action. She would have nothing further to say to Miss Kelsey just then, neither would she take Jumper severely to task, as she had at first thought of doing, but, on the contrary, she resolved to be exceedingly gracious to him, and try and worm the secret, if there was one, out of him by kindness and flattery.

But how about poor Mr. Jumper?

Mary had told the truth regarding his conduct in the kitchen and his sudden exit from the house.

In fact, he actually contemplated suicide during the next five minutes while walking towards Broadway. Was ever a man so punished for doing a charitable act?

"It is all up with me now!" he muttered, "that is, if she believes she will frighten no money out of me. I wonder what she would take in ready money and let me alone hereafter? I am certain she is after money; yes, she certainly must be a blackmailer, else why did she come to my house? I must do one of two things, either buy her off or commit suicide."

Thus he pondered while walking aimlessly around. Anywhere to be away from his own home and the sewing circle now in session there, and that dreadful schoolmarm.

Night finally came on and the circle broke up. He drew nearer to his house as if endeavoring to ascertain whether there was a volcano at work there, but to all outward appearances everything was calm and peaceful as ever.

After waiting around for ten or fifteen minutes in the neighborhood, he espied his servant girl, Mary, approaching, going on an errand to a neighboring store.

Confident in her fidelity, he ran up to her.

"Mary."

"Oh!" she exclaimed, before recognizing him.

"Is that yersilf, Mr. Jumper?"

"Yes. Have you just come from the house?"

"Troth, I have."

"How about those hens?"

"Hins?"

"Those women—that sewing circle?"

"Oh, but they're all gone, thank goodness."

"All?"

"Ivery hin of them."

"Well?"

"An' dinner's waitin' ye, so it is."

"How about my two hens?"

"Hins! ha-ha-ha! They're at home, an' wonderin' fut has become av ye."

"Are they in good humor?"

"Faix, illigant. Ther parthy just suited them, so it did."

"No talk about me?"

"Only wonderin' where ye are, sure."

"Oh, all right. I'll go home at once," said he, starting away.

"Fut is the mather wid her ould man, I wonder?" mused Mary, looking after him. "Sure, he acts awfully funny, anyhow."

"I guess it's all right," thought Mr. Jumper, as he walked towards his home. "Guess she didn't say anything to them, but I understand

her game. She only came to threaten me in a gentle way, and to show me that I was in her power. But I shall certainly hear from her, and when I do I will make it a point to find out how much money she will take never to cross my path again. But, oh, if ever I do a charitable act again, I hope to be drawn and quartered."

Having this understanding with himself, Skidmore Jumper entered his house, and when his wife and mother-in-law asked him where he had been so long, he said:

"Oh, I had some business to attend to. You don't for a moment suppose that I am such a brainless ass as to remain among that flock of cackling hens, do you?"

"Cackling hens! You might at least have treated my company politely, not dodged out without excusing yourself," said his wife.

"Bah! I got quite enough of them as it was."

"And probably they got enough of you, only they were too well bred to say so or to show it by their looks."

"Well, I'm satisfied," replied Jumper.

"Oh, yes, you are always satisfied with your own actions, of course."

"I am not so sure of that," put in Mrs. Scratcher, and there was something significant in the tone of her voice.

Mr. Jumper looked at her, but he could not catch her eye, and Mrs. Jumper looked inquiringly from one to another.

"No, I am *not* satisfied with all my own actions," he said softly.

The two women exchanged glances.

"Oh, you are probably sorry that you ever got married, but I can assure you, sir, that you are not more so than I am," sneered his wife.

"Now I wasn't thinking of that act of folly in particular, but come to think of it, wouldn't a person imagine that I would be happy, when I can't even get a meal of victuals without having to get in some infernal row?"

"But you make them yourself."

"Did I make *this* one?"

"Yes, of course you did."

"All right, have it so; have it all your own way, for the more we argue the question the more we shall fight and get away from the facts. I am sick of it, and it has either got to stop or I shall eject the *source* of all the trouble," said he, glancing savagely at his mother-in-law.

"Oh, of course you will blame it all upon me, for that is a piece of your well-known gallantry," she half sneered, half whined.

"I am only just, madam, and only truthful; for when you are away from us we live happily and peacefully together. You are a typical mother-in-law, and I really think I have endured quite enough of you," said he, bitterly.

"Very well, sir; I will withdraw myself from your little haven of rest."

"I only hope you will; but as you have repeatedly threatened to do the same thing, I fear you will not do so now."

"You needn't give yourself any uneasiness about it now, sir, for a lady of my sensitive nature does not have to be insulted more than once before she frees herself from the insulter. But before I take my final leave of you, I propose to satisfy myself regarding a few things, one of which occurred to me this afternoon at the sewing circle."

"Mr. Jumper started, and turned from red to white, which transition she was not slow to notice."

"Do anything you like, so long as you keep away from me."

"Ah, Mr. Jumper, I can keep away from you and probably do something you will not like," she fairly hissed at him.

"Oh, bah! I understand your threats."

"And I understand your equivocal position, sir, which fact you will please not forget," said she, rising and going from the room.

"What is the meaning of this, Skidmore?"

"Oh, don't bother me. She is forever finding either a mare's nest or a cause for a row," he replied, also leaving the room.

Of course Mrs. Jumper sought her mother for the purpose of finding out what it was she had hinted at. But she could not tell her anything beyond her exceedingly vague suspicions, although she lovingly assured her that she would

post her the moment she found anything out for a certainty against her husband.

"I wonder if that old she-heathen has in reality found out anything?" mused Jumper, as he sat down in his room for a smoke. "I must see that confounded tow-headed school-marm at once and find out how much she will sell out for. But, oh! catch me ever doing a charitable act again, that's all."

This, indeed, looked like a domestic whirlwind, and to no one did it appear more like one than to Skidmore Jumper.

He did not see his mother-in-law again that evening or the next morning, but he felt that she was still under his roof.

Soon after breakfast he set out for the purpose of hunting up Miss Kelsey, and to find out how much would buy her off, and after several inquiries he learned that she was living with her uncle, a very respectable old clergyman, and he called upon her with his mind fully made up to have the business settled.

She received him very graciously, and with so much evident pleasure that he was rather non-plussed, and hardly knew what to say.

"Oh, I am so glad you have called," said she, extending both her plump white hands.

"Yes, of course she is," thought Jumper.

"And my dear uncle will be quite as glad, for I have told him of your kindness."

"Yes, but—"

"He has often thought of calling on you."

"The deuce he has; same errand, I suppose; both blackmailers, no doubt," thought Jumper.

"Yes, he wants to thank you for your kindness."

"But I—I don't want to be thanked, and my errand here is to ask you how much you will take never to molest me again," said he, bracing up.

"Molest you—molest you, Mr. Jumper?" she asked, with wide open eyes.

"Why—that is—yes, I—"

"What do you mean, sir?" she asked, with considerable indignation.

"That letter you wrote me."

She looked at him a moment, and then a smile stole over her pretty face.

"What was the object of that letter, pray?"

"Did it annoy you?"

"Very much."

"Well, I know I shouldn't have written it; I only did so for a little fun, just as I asked you through the telephone if you succeeded in fooling your mother-in-law," she said, laughing.

"I did not receive that message."

"You did not?"

"No, but she did, and I heard about it quite often and effectively."

"Now that is really too bad, and I certainly never would have done it if I had suspected that any but yourself would have received it."

"But your visit to my house yesterday?"

"Was certainly not for the purpose of making you unhappy or compromising you in any way."

"But it did, though."

"Your mother-in-law?"

"That self same angel."

"I feared as much, for she questioned me very closely after you went away, evidently trying to find out if there was any intimacy between us."

"And you?"

"Gave her not the slightest satisfaction."

"What!"

"I hated her, and instantly pitied you."

"Why, I believe you are an angel, after all," said he, offering her his hands.

"Thank you. But, to be serious, I have done what I have simply for fun—perhaps to tease you a bit on account of old times; but not for my right hand, my good friend, would I say or do a thing that could possibly annoy you."

"Oh, thank you—thank you," he said, earnestly.

"And did you for a moment suspect that I would?"

"I will confess that I hardly knew what to think. I feared the worst, and came to see you about it."

"I am glad you did so, that I may reassure you beyond the shadow of a further doubt. I saw at a glance that the corrugated angel was

a thorn in your side, and so was prepared for her."

"Good! And if she should ever attempt to pry into the matter any further—"

"I will make her ashamed of herself."

"I doubt your strength in that direction."

"Leave it to me."

"I will do so, and return happy."

"Now come and see my uncle."

"I don't dare to."

"Why not, pray?"

"Because who knows but he and Mrs. Scratcher might get together sometime and he give it all away."

"Very well; perhaps you are right," said she, laughing.

"I feel that I am, and if you will explain the case to him it would probably put him on his guard and prevent his doing me an unintentional injury."

"I will see to that."

And so it was all arranged, and Mr. Jumper returned home in the best of spirits. He even smiled on his mother-in-law, whom he encountered, and in various ways showed that he felt at peace with the whole world.

In less than a week Jumper's was a happy family again comparatively, even though Mrs. Scratcher forgot to leave his house, and an outsider would have been loath to say that trouble ever existed there.

Soon after this happy termination, Mrs. Jumper got it into her head that she wanted a family picture taken; a group, embracing her husband, herself and mother.

To this he gave a reluctant consent, and Mrs. Jumper went to make the arrangements and fix the time for sitting. Her mother accompanied her, although she was laboring under the impression that Mr. Jumper didn't like to have her in the family group in the proposed picture any more than in the real living group.

So she concluded to free her mind to the photographer, for she had to free it to somebody or burst, and taking him aside, she whispered:

"Now this man—my son-in-law—is a very willful person, and I wish to warn you against him. He don't want to sit with me for a picture, and will probably make up a face or do some other absurd thing to spoil the negative."

"Is that so?" asked the photographer.

"I am sorry to say that it is."

"Why, he must be crazy."

"I fear he is. But I thought it was only just to warn you of what might be."

"Thank you. But I will fix him, have no fear; I took pictures for the rogues' gallery for three years, and I know exactly how to get along with these contrary fellows."

"I trust so," and the dear old lady went away feeling that she had got even with Skidmore, and forestalled any little attempt to spoil the proposed picture.

Perhaps she really felt that Jumper would do something to spoil it, knowing how well he loved her, for he had rebelled against making one of such a group, and had only been won over after much coaxing on the part of his wife.

But if he was at that moment secretly congratulating himself upon any such revenge as that, she also hugged the secret assurance to her heart that he would not only be thwarted, but probably be made ashamed enough to appease the great appetite of her revenge.

And that is how matters stood for our landlord.

Well, the appointed time for the sitting came around in a few days, and the Jumper group went to the photographer's.

It cannot be said with a strict regard for truth that Mr. Jumper was perfectly happy, or that he was as happy as he would have been had his angel mother-in-law not been going to make one of the family picture. Nevertheless, being a good-natured man, and ready to do anything for peace, he concluded to grin and bear it the best he could.

But of course this did not make him happy to a remarkable extent, and Mrs. Scratcher felt very much nettled about it, for she could see just how he felt towards her.

So when it came their turn to sit, she just

whispered to the operator, informing him that this was the man she had spoken to him about before.

The operator glanced at Jumper, who couldn't for the life of him understand how it was that he looked so confoundedly ugly.

Without a word he proceeded to pose them in a group according to his own notions of art and propriety, which arrangement was this. The two ladies were seated side by side in front, and Jumper was posed in a standing position just behind them, a grouping which he disliked, as it seemed to imply that he was only second fiddle in that domestic circle.

But so long as he cared hardly a rap for the pictures anyway, he concluded to let them all have their own sweet ways in making it.

Finally everything was arranged, and the artist went into a blind pantry or something of the kind to get his prepared plate.

Returning, he cast another threatening glance at Jumper, sat down the plate and then took another peep at them through the camera to see if everything was still lovely.

Jumper frowned, for he was getting tired of standing, to say nothing of the bore of the thing anyway, but the artist took no further notice of it at that moment.

But, throwing the black velvet hood over the nozzle of his machine, he inserted the plate, and then glanced again at the group. Neither of the females had moved a hair breadth.

Seizing the velvet cloth with his left hand, he suddenly produced a huge revolver with his other, and brought it to bear upon Mr. Jumper, who was, of course, thunderstruck.

"Now, sir, please assume a cheerful expression," said the artist, with diabolical deliberation.

Jumper dropped down behind the ladies.

"Stop it! Take it away! Police!" he shouted.

"Stand up, sir, or I will open on you," retorted the artist.

"He's a lunatic!"

"Stand up or I will bore you."

"You bore me anyhow."

"Please don't Mr. Artist; he will obey you," said Mrs. Jumper, herself well frightened.

"Well, let's see if he will," said he, lowering the pistol out of danger. "Resume your position and assume a happy expression."

"Oh, Lord!" moaned Jumper, fully believing they had fallen into the hands of a maniac.

But he resumed his position and tried to look happy; but it was a dismal failure, as was the negative which was taken of the group.

"You will have to sit again," said he, returning from his developing-room. "But do you think you can behave yourself without coercion," he added, turning to Mr. Jumper.

"Yes, of course I can. What's the matter with you?"

"Oh, that's all right. I understand such customers as you are," said he, proceeding to take another negative.

This time it was a success; but no sooner had he pronounced it so, than Mr. Jumper fled from the place and ran to the nearest station-house, where he lodged a complaint.

In company with an officer, fully armed, he returned to the photographer.

CHAPTER VIII.

SKIDMORE JUMPER'S encounter with the photographer, whom his mother-in-law had warned against him, will be remembered.

When he returned in company with an officer from the station-house, he found that both his wife and her mother had left the place, frightened half to death more than likely, and he at once pointed the maniac artist out to the officer.

"Look here, I want you," said the officer, approaching and placing his hand on his shoulder.

"Want me?" asked the photographer.

"Yes."

"What for?"

"For pulling a pistol on this man."

The photographer indulged in a big laugh.

"Do you know who this man is?" he finally asked, turning to the officer.

"Well, no, not exactly. Why?"

"He's a lunatic."

"The deuce!" exclaimed the officer, turning to Jumper with a frown.

"Fact."

"How do you know?"

"I was told so; warned against him."

"By whom?"

"His mother-in-law, one of the group."

Mr. Jumper indulged in a whistle.

"His mother-in-law, eh?"

"Yes. She said that he was a 'crank,' but slightly removed from a lunatic, and that I would have to be very severe with him in the taking of the negative, or he would spoil it by his 'mugging,' and cause me lots of trouble."

"And you?"

"Pulled an unloaded pistol on him to keep him in form. Understand?"

The officer, by his looks, admitted that he did, but he turned to Jumper.

"How is this?" he asked.

"Well, to tell the truth, Mr. Officer, I do smell my mother-in-law in this," said Mr. Jumper, looking exceedingly foolish.

"And you must know that I did only what you or any man would have done under the circumstances," said the artist.

"She told you I was crazy, eh?"

"She said you was bad."

"Well, I feel bad."

"And warned me against you."

"But you succeeded in getting a good negative, did you not?"

"A very good one indeed."

"And where have my angels gone?"

"I give it up, sir. They went out soon after you did, seemingly satisfied with everything."

"Oh, undoubtedly."

"But do you wish me to arrest this man?" asked the officer, turning to Mr. Jumper.

"N-no. I guess he is not so much to blame after all, now that I understand it."

"How so?"

"I have a mother-in-law."

"Oh! I sympathize with you," said the officer, shaking him cordially by the hand.

"Thanks."

"A regular?"

"A thoroughbred."

"Shake again!"

"Make it two," said the photographer.

"You have one?"

"Oh!" and he uttered a terrible affirmative groan.

"Shake!" said Mr. Jumper.

They shook.

"Do you wish me to arrest him?"

"No, he has a mother-in-law," said Jumper, pathetically.

"Well, that shows you to be a man of sympathy. Come away and allow the poor man to do the best he can," said the officer.

"Yes, by all means. I beg your pardon for all this, but until you explained, I could not understand your actions. Now I do, and forgive you as I hope to be forgiven."

After due consideration there was no arrest, and Mr. Jumper went home, humped in the back at the thought of his indignity.

From that moment there could be no further excuse, that mother-in-law must go, for there was no knowing what she might yet do.

"I have found out all about it," said he, in reply to a question by his wife, regarding the affair.

"You have? Well, what was the matter with the man? Was he crazy?"

"No, but this angel mother of yours informed him that I was, and that accounts for the whole trouble."

"Mother told him that you were crazy?"

"Yes, coming about as near to the truth as she usually does. But I think she has good grounds for believing me so, for no man in his sober senses would keep her for an hour, and she has probably sense enough left to know it."

"Well, sir, it served you just right," said that wingless angel.

"Served me right!" exclaimed Mr. Jumper.

"Yes, for there can be no doubt but that you would have spoiled the negative in some way to gratify your spite, because I happened to make one of the group. It was his pistol that made you behave yourself."

"Great Moses! Mr. Jumper exclaimed, laying

his knife and fork upon his plate and looking at her with astonishment.

"Oh, that's right. Swear at me."

"I ought to forget myself even further than that, and fling you headlong into the street."

"You had better try it, Skidmore Jumper, if you think it would be healthy for you. I dare you to lay a finger on me, sir."

"I shall try very hard not to bring myself down to your level, madame, but you must leave this house at once and forever."

"Indeed!"

"Yes, indeed. You have disgraced and degraded me quite enough, and made my home a little furnace just as long as you can do so under my roof, and don't misunderstand me."

"Certainly not, sir. I shall be only too glad to part company with a brute," she hissed.

"Very well, your final exit will not only afford me pleasure, but cause a season of rejoicing in the whole house, for there isn't a tenant in the whole building who does not detest you."

"It is false, sir, false! They respect and commiserate me on account of the hardships I endure, living with such a son-in-law."

"Very well; they will probably congratulate you on escaping from such trouble."

"Well, you needn't think that you are going to frighten me out."

"I don't wish to do so. I only wish to make sure of your going."

"As for that matter, I shall go when I get good and ready, and let me see if you dare carry your brutality far enough to force me away."

"Well, if you stay beyond a reasonable time, I assure you that I shall take some physical exercise with your case," replied Mr. Jumper, at that moment finishing his dinner and getting up from the table.

"Oh, I'd only like to have you try it, you good for nothing rascal," she flung hot and hissing at him, as he left the room.

"Now, mother, you know that was not exactly right," said Mrs. Jumper.

"What was not right?"

"Why, your telling such a story to the photographer about Skidmore."

"Don't talk to me. I know how he hates me."

"But such things will not make him love you any better."

"Never mind, he hates me, and would have spoiled the picture had I not warned the artist."

"I cannot agree with you, mother."

"Oh, of course not! Join right in with your noble husband against your mother. That is about what I might expect," cried the old lady, going for her pocket-handkerchief.

"It was only the other day that you did not regard him as such a bad man."

"When?"

"When he made you a present of a new silk dress and bonnet."

"Well, see what I have endured at his hands."

"What, his board?"

The wife was waxing a trifle caustic now.

"Board! Isn't your own mother entitled to her living, I'd like to know?"

"But not of her son-in-law, and so long as he treats you well, I should think that he was entitled to equally good treatment from you."

"Oh, go on! Give your poor mother a good lecture on her behavior; make her feel that she is dependent more keenly than she now does! Uphold your husband in his abuse of her," she replied, and as the brine began to come by this time, she commenced mopping with her handkerchief and retired to her own room, where she remained crying and pouting for the next two days, and refusing to come out or to eat until hunger drove her out.

But she made no move towards going away, although she was a greatly altered mother-in-law in many respects.

As for Skidmore Jumper, he knew all the while that she would not go; that she had fastened herself upon him like a cancer, for life, and he got over his first mad, and after his wife had gently interceded for her two or three times, he finally consented to try her once more, on condition that she mind her own business absolutely.

Of course she said she would starve before

she would accept such humiliating shelter at his hands, but she didn't mean it, although she had her own way in one thing, and that was to make Mr. Jumper agree never to speak to her again, while she maintained towards him the same condition.

This she perhaps thought would break Skidmore's heart, but it didn't even bend it a penny's worth, and he agreed to the terms eagerly, much to her chagrin.

Well, this state of affairs lasted nearly a week, and things became quite pleasant again. In fact, they were too pleasant to last, or to exactly please the aged, no-winged angel of Jumper's household, and she began to think how she could break the silent truce and be once more able to put her tongue into other matters than her own.

But for one thing she might have forced her way faster than she did. The holidays were approaching, and her daughter had informed her that Jumper was exceedingly liberal about that season of the year, and without doubt she would come in for something handsome. So she restrained herself with—as she expressed it—Christian fortitude, and left Jumper practically unmolested, waiting for the holidays to come and go.

But Mr. Jumper, although naturally an easy-going man and generally ready to forget and forgive, had his suspicions. He did not half believe that she had been cured of mischief-making, and the quiet of their present behavior rather warned him than otherwise that there was a storm brewing in the atmosphere, so he was continually on the look-out for it.

True, they had passed the period of silence towards each other some time since, although Our Landlord on his part always had but little to say. But in contemplating the presents he should give during the holidays, he never took his angel mother-in-law into consideration at all, notwithstanding her hopes and desires in an opposite direction.

And as to the presents which he should make, or those which he would naturally be expected to make, he was slightly confused himself; he knew what he would give to Bella, his niece, who still boarded with Mrs. Cutter on the fourth flat, but what to give his wife was a puzzle, for she had almost everything that the human heart craves.

But finally he concluded to buy her a chatelaine watch, and after due investigation he purchased one and took it home.

This was two days before Christmas.

Both Mrs. Jumper and her mother were on their good behavior, and he was feeling pretty good, although still unsatisfied regarding the purchase he had made.

Mrs. Jumper knew from his looks and actions that he had bought a present for her, although he did not say so in words, and had it still in his overcoat pocket. She was as loving and gracious as a young kitten, and several times during the evening expressed to him that he was one of the most sublimated, woutsy poutsy, ducky dears of a husband that ever lived.

Mr. Jumper took into account the amount of saccharine matter contained in all this, but still he said nothing respecting the present he had bought for her, or that he might be expected to buy.

They retired at about the accustomed hour, and Jumper continued to think over what he had done in the matter of a present.

"I don't half like it," he mused. "It is a Frenchy affair, anyhow, and she is too old to wear it. Ten to one I shall get laughed at for my lack of judgment, and she will be sneered at for a lack of taste. I don't think I'll give it to her after all. I'll take it back to-morrow, and exchange it for something more appropriate."

With this resolve fixed in his mind, he fell asleep, and was soon giving vocal evidence that he had a perfectly clear conscience.

But Mrs. Jumper didn't fall asleep, not by several majorities. She felt certain that her husband had bought her a present, and that it was even then in some of his pockets, so, after assuring herself that he was fast asleep, she stole softly out of bed, and began to go through his pockets in order to satisfy her curiosity.

In one of his overcoat pockets she found a neat package, which she proceeded to strip the paper from. This brought out a box, on the lid of which was written in his well-known hand:

"To my own darling."

With palpitating heart she opened the box and beheld the chatelaine watch; the very thing she had so long been wishing for.

"Oh! isn't he just an old darling?" she mused, replacing it, and again doing up the package as she found it. "To his own darling!" Well, he is just as good as he can be, and I ought to love him three times as much as I do. But I'll put it back and let him have all the pleasure of presenting it to me Christmas morning. Not for the world would I have him know that I have seen it, for that would destroy more than half of his pleasure."

With this understanding she turned out the gas, and crept back into bed again, where she lay with busy brain for an hour or more before she could sleep, during which time she was picturing to herself how she would wear the watch, and how envious the sight of it would make her friends.

She awoke the next morning in such a state of enthusiasm, that she actually threw her arms around her husband's neck and kissed him, a thing she seldom if ever indulged herself in, save on the near approach of festive occasions. Mr. Jumper was quiet and reserved.

"Oh, don't he think he is fooling me nicely?" she said to herself. "What would he say if he knew that I had already seen my present? And so I am his own darling, am I? Of course I am. The idea of my Skidmore having any other darling; of course I am his darling."

This was the burden of her self-communings as she thought of her present. "My own darling," ran continually through her mind. In fact, the squeak of Jumper's boots seemed to intone the endearing sentiment, and she was happy.

That day Mr. Jumper went down town as he usually did, and after he had gone Mrs. J. felt like exploding. It didn't seem possible for her to keep that secret for two whole days, so she told it to her mother, and they gabbled over it nearly all day, although the question was still uppermost in the mind of Mrs. Scratcher: "What will he give me for my Christmas?"

If she had only known, she wouldn't have been half so hopeful.

Meanwhile, Jumper went back to the store where he had bought the chatelaine watch, and expressed a wish to exchange it for something else, on account of its inappropriateness, to which the jeweler gave rather a reluctant consent.

"I am very certain, sir, that you cannot find a nicer present to make a lady," said he.

"But she is too old, and although I have not shown it to her yet, still I have come to the conclusion that it would be more appropriate for a young lady," replied Mr. Jumper.

"Well, perhaps you have some young lady friend or relation who would like it."

"I have only my niece, and to her I am going to present these diamond earrings," he said, pointing to a pair that he had priced the day before.

"Very well."

"Stop! I do know of a young lady to whom I am under some obligation, and she would most likely be delighted with it. I'll send it to her," said he, suddenly thinking of Miss Kelsey, whose friendly assurances had lifted a load from his mind.

And so that thing was settled, although he broke up the box on which "To my own darling" was written, and was furnished with another, on which he wrote: "From your Uncle Jumper."

This he sent to her address by express, and then began to search through the stock for an appropriate present for his wife.

As before stated, she already had nearly everything that could be thought of or bought, and poor Mr. Jumper found himself in a quandary.

"Oh, confound the business, I won't bother with it any more. I'll give her twenty-five dol-

lars and let her buy whatever she may fancy herself," said he, finally.

So it was arranged. He bought the diamonds for his niece, after which he returned home, still looking unconcerned and quite as disinterested as a goat who is eating up somebody's washing.

Well, Christmas morning came, and Mrs. Jumper was up bright and early, as was also her mother. Mary, the servant girl, had received a few nice present from Mr. and Mrs. Jumper the night before, and consequently she was feeling in good spirits, and had a toasting hot breakfast ready betimes.

Mrs. Jumper returned to wish her sleepy spouse a merry Christmas, and also to inform him that breakfast was ready.

In the course of half an hour he put in an appearance in the dining-room, where he evidently intended to present her with the watch, and in order to remind him of it she began to tell what the other ladies in the house had received.

"Well, my dear, I tried to find something for a present for you, but could not," said he.

She didn't believe him, and laughed good-naturedly, and said she didn't care for a present anyhow. It was enough that she had the best husband in the world.

"The fact is, I couldn't think of anything that you have not already got, and so I came to the conclusion to give you twenty-five dollars, and let you buy whatever you may see that suits you," said he, taking a roll of bills from his vest pocket.

Mrs. Jumper got very red in the face.

She glanced at her mother; exchanged glances in fact, and they weren't company glances either, but yet neither spoke.

"There you are; a brand-new twenty and a five. But if that isn't enough, I'll double it," said Jumper, handing her the money.

"Do you pretend to say that you bought me no present?" she asked, looking half a hurricane at him as she spoke.

"Certainly not. I told you I couldn't find anything that I thought you would like."

Without saying another word, she threw the bills in his face, and then hit him on the nose with a breakfast roll.

"Take that, you rascal!" she exclaimed.

"What! What do you mean, Mrs. Jumper?" asked he, starting back.

"Don't you dare to Mrs. Jumper me, you mean, deceitful thing! I am ashamed of the name."

"Good gracious! What is the meaning of this?"

"Meaning, indeed! A few paltry dollars is good enough for me, but you can buy a chatelaine watch for your 'darling,' can't you?" she hurled at him red hot, at the same time hurling herself from the room in tears.

"What is the meaning of this?" asked Jumper, turning to his mother-in-law.

"How can you ask such a question, sir?" said she, in tones resembling scratching on a piece of tin.

"How can I? Why, because I would like to find out," he replied, sharply.

"Then ask your own guilty conscience."

"Guilty fiddlestick! I have no guilty conscience to ask."

"Then you must have a seared one. She saw it with her own eyes."

"Saw it—saw what?"

"Why, the chatelaine watch, to be sure. She saw it in your pocket while you were asleep, and saw it addressed to 'My own darling,' which she was foolish enough to think was meant for her, poor thing!"

Mr. Jumper was paralyzed.

He turned red and then turned white, while the keen eyes of his mother-in-law were upon him.

Wasn't he in a fix now?

He had no further desire for breakfast. His appetite was all gone.

"I have always known that you were full of faults, Skidmore Jumper, but until now I did not know, as certainly she did not, that you were unfaithful to your marriage vow."

"Oh! the —. What are you talking about?"

"Ask your own heart, if you have one."

CHAPTER IX.

"What nonsense!"

"What perfidy!"

"You are both fools!"

"And have a knave to deal with," said she, rising and leaving the room.

"Well, I'll be hanged!" mused Jumper. "This is a 'merry Christmas' for me indeed. What a blooming idiot I was to ever buy that chatelaine watch, and what an imbecile I was to bring it home! And so she went through my pockets after I had gone to sleep, eh? Either I never ought to sleep, or should never have pockets. Perhaps I ought to substitute common sense for both. What a precious row! And all on account of a woman's curiosity. Shall I ever learn anything? Now what is to be done? If she should ever see that watch on Miss Kelsey she would know it at once, and there would be an explosion. Was there ever an honest man so beset? I verily believe that if I was dishonest and venial that I should not have half the trouble I now have. Oh, confound the whole thing," said he, picking up the bank notes and returning them to his pocket sadly.

Then he went in quest of his wife, but she had locked herself into her room and would not allow him admission.

In sheer desperation he sought his mother-in-law and attempted an explanation.

"I did buy a chatelaine watch for her," said he, "but I afterwards thought it would not be appropriate for her to wear, so I took it back and offered her the value of it in money that she might buy what she wanted. Now what great harm was there in that?" he asked.

"Well, if what you say is true, perhaps there was no great harm in it," said she.

"But do you doubt my word, madame, to the extent of calling me a liar?"

"Perhaps not. But you could easily satisfy her by referring her to the jeweler from whom you bought the watch."

"Not a bit of it. If she cannot take my unsupported word, she may pout from now until doomsday, and you may join her, if you like," said he, banging his hat upon his head and leaving the house.

Of course Mrs. Jumper was informed of his excuse, and as it was reasonable in all respects, she parted gradually with a large portion of her wrath, entertaining only that which had been aroused by disappointment.

After crying for an hour or so, she began to be more reasonable, and to see that her husband's objections were good, as against the wearing of such a Frenchy affair as a chatelaine watch, and finally she began to feel ashamed of herself for manifesting so much temper, and wished he would come back.

With much foreboding he finally did come back, with his mind made up to offer her another watch of some kind, if nothing else would satisfy her. But when he found that she, too, had come to the sensible conclusion that such a fast display would be contrary to good taste, he was so much astonished that he gave her two hundred dollars with which to purchase whatever she liked, both for herself and for her mother.

And gradually good feeling was restored in the household again, and once more was Mr. Jumper comparatively happy. He protested fervently and truthfully that he loved no other woman but her, and acknowledged that he had addressed her on the box containing the watch, as "my own darling," and also that he meant it.

In this way she was mollified, and the next day both she and her mother were in the possession of new cloaks of the latest and finest make.

On New Year's day he gave them each a number of knick-knacks which still further healed the trouble, and all ill-feeling seemed to have blown over.

It was a fortnight afterwards when Mrs. Jumper startled him with this announcement:

"Hubby, dear, the sewing circle is to meet at our house next Wednesday."

Mr. Jumper nearly lost his breath. That chatelaine watch!

THAT chatelaine watch!

If Miss Kelsey attended that sewing circle, she would be sure to wear it.

Mr. Jumper felt that he must see her and humble himself again by making an explanation, and asking her not to wear it.

Was ever an innocent man so used and incontinently put about?

Why did he ever marry? why did he ever do it, and—and, especially, why did he ever saddle his happiness with a mother-in-law?

But his most acute troubles having been brought about on account of his accidental acquaintance with Miss Bella Kelsey, he often felt like asking why he had ever fallen in with her, and why the generous impulses of his nature had moved him to befriend her.

He visited her house, but she was not in; he waited, but she did not come.

The sewing circle was to meet that afternoon, but the servant said it was extremely doubtful whether Miss Kelsey would return home or not before attending the circle, but still she might.

Wild at the thought of her attending that social gathering with that chatelaine watch hung to her belt, he left his card with a strong message for her not to leave, if she returned, until he could see her.

Then he skipped for home as fast as he could go.

It was an hour or two yet before the sewing circle was to meet. His wife and angel mother-in-law were in their chambers dressing, and he at once made his way to the kitchen.

"Mary," he said, approaching the servant, "where are they?"

"Who, sur?"

"My—my hens, you know."

"Faix, I do. I think they be oilin' up ther feathers for company," said she.

"Mary, here is a dollar for you, and if you succeed in doing what I wish you to, I will make it five—yes, ten."

"Fut is it, sur?"

"Do you remember that young lady who gave me so much trouble some time since?"

"She wid ther purty flaxen hair?"

"Yes—yes."

"I do. She wor here at the sewin' jambo-ree."

"Yes—yes, that is the one. Now I will tell you what I want of you. You must go to the door and answer to every bell that is rung; that is, until she comes, when you must whisper to her not to wear her Christmas gift; and if she has it on, to put it in her pocket. Now, do you understand, Mary?"

"I do. But will she?"

"Oh, to be sure she will. I don't want her to wear a certain present which she received from her uncle last Christmas, and if she has it on, tell her to put it in her pocket."

"All roight, sur."

"Make a nice job of it, and I will give you a ten-dollar bill."

"Yer bet I will, sur."

"I'll be back presently," said he, darting out of the house, mopping his forehead as he made his way toward Miss Kelsey's residence again.

"Fut's ther matter wid ther ould man, I wonder?" mused Mary. "Sure he seems ter be in hot wather all ther toime. Fut! has he ter do wid this young lady's uncle's present, I wonder? Some divilment concarnin' that ould mother-in-law av his, I'll warrant. Sure, Mr. Jumper wouldn't do a wrong thing quicker nor he'd cut his hand off, but she do be gettin' him inter all sorts av scrapes all ther toime. But it's lucky for her that she aren't me mother-in-law, or me mother-in-law, for I'd bust it wid a kick, so I wud."

On arriving at Miss Kelsey's residence, he found that although she had not returned, her aunt had, and reported that she had gone to the sewing circle.

With a groan and more perspiration, Mr. Jumper started back home again, wondering if he should be in time to intercept her, or whether Mary would succeed in getting him out of his trouble.

Of course, the first person he sought when he arrived there, was the servant girl.

"Has she come yet?" he asked, excitedly.

"She has not."

"Are you sure?"

"Troth, I am."

"Have you answered every ring?"

"I have, indeed. Sure's, there's only two or three at all—at all."

"Good. I'll go out and lay in wait for her," said he, mopping his flushed face, and going from the door.

Now, Mrs. Scratcher, his altogether lovely mother-in-law, noticed his little confab with the servant girl, and being, as ever, unwilling that anything should be said or done in the house that she did not know about, she at once interviewed the kitchen queen.

"Mary."

"Mum?"

"What was Mr. Jumper saying to you just now?" she asked, patronizingly.

"Not much," said she, turning away.

"Not much? Why did he look so flushed?"

"Troth, I niver axed him."

"But you can tell me what he said, surely."

"I could."

"Well?"

"He wanted ter know had the ould hins got together yet," said she, laughing merrily.

"Old hens! That is a nice way to speak of ladies, indeed!" said the aged angel, angrily.

"Faix, I think so, too. I never hearn a betther comparison in all me loife," she replied, again laughing.

"You should have resented it, being one of our sex yourself."

"Wan av yees?"

"Certainly."

"An' der yees call me a *hin*?"

"No, but you are—"

"Bad luck ter yees, if ye dare ter call me a *hin*, I'll fire ye out av this so quick that ye'll think ther house was struck by loightning, so ye will; moind that."

"But you don't understand me, girl. What I was about to say was, that you are a woman, and—"

"I'm not, I'm a dacint Oirish gurl."

"True, but you are a woman, nevertheless, and you should have resented such an insult to your sex."

"Troth, he did not insult me sex. He only said as how yer sewin' circle, as yer call it, war a lot of ould hins, an' I think he was roight, be-dad!"

Mrs. Scratcher looked at her a moment, but seeing she could make nothing out of the girl, she turned away, drew on her best company face again, and returned to the parlor, where three or four of her familiars had already arrived and were indulging in preliminary gossip.

Mr. Jumper stationed himself not far from his own door, and patiently waited for Miss Kelsey, whom he expected every moment, but she did not come. Singly and in couples the other members of the circle came, but yet she did not manifest herself.

He waited around for an hour or more and yet she came not. But still he did not dare to leave his post for fear that she might come even if it was late, and so he wasted another hour in waiting and watching.

Finally he gave it up and went into the house, as he might have done at first, had he known that the young lady had gone to *another* sewing circle, in another part of the city.

But, of course, he did not know that, for it was just his luck to be kept continually in hot water on account of his innocent, although thoughtless acts.

But he was, however, enabled to see her and make the humiliating explanation of affairs the following day at her residence.

"My dear Mr. Jumper, I am so sorry for you, for I verily believe that you are the most stirred-up good man that I ever saw," she said, laughing.

"That is so, I believe. But who would have thought that my wife would have suspected that I had a present for her and gone in search of it?" said he.

"Women are keen sometimes."

"Yes, and that very keenness on the part of my wife has kept me a long time in my best

cauldron of hot water. But you will forgive me?"

"To be sure I will, and return your present, if you wish it."

"Oh, not for the world. No—no, keep it, by all means, only be careful not to wear it so that Mrs. Jumper or her mother will see it, for either of them would at once open on you with a running fire of questions regarding how you became possessed of it, and as that would either get me into a scrape or be the cause of your telling fibs, why, you can save all trouble by avoiding letting them know you possess a chate-laine watch."

"Never fear, Uncle Jumper, you shall meet no harm on my account if I can prevent it," said she, extending her hand to him.

"Oh, thank you. You are real good."

"I trust so; and I shall have a real good laugh over this affair when I am alone."

"But for goodness sake, don't tell anybody about it, for in that case it would not be a week before the whole city would be laughing at me, too," said he, sadly.

"Never fear. Trust me."

"I will. Good-bye."

"Good-bye, Uncle Jumper," said she, and no sooner had she closed the front door on him than she began to indulge in the laugh that she predicted would surely come.

And Jumper laughed, too, just as soon as he felt himself well out of the scrape; and a person seeing him for the first time the day before would have failed to recognize him as the same man now, as he plodded back to his house of French flats, so happy and entirely changed did he look.

These sudden changes from sorrow to gladness, however, did not escape his mother-in-law. She still suspected that there was some dreadful secret hanging over the house, and she resolved to fathom it or perish in the cause of investigation.

How far she would have gone in this, or how soon she would have commenced it, had she not received the following letter from a maiden sister residing in Baltimore, may never be known:

"DEAR SISTER:—You know I have been on the point of visiting you ever since you went to live in New York, but I am now pointed stronger than I ever was before. You know I haven't seen your son-in-law yet, and now I am going to do so without fail. Give him my love and tell him I am coming to stay a week or two with him, perhaps more, all according to the welcome I receive. From your sister,

"HULDAH BEAN."

"Gracious me!" thought Mrs. Scratcher, "what shall be done? I know that she and Skidmore Jumper will never get along together, for she is not only a confirmed old maid, but a confirmed man-hater as well, and both of them being quick-tempered under certain circumstances, I don't think her visit will be a very long one. Wonder who she will leave her pets and poodles with?" and with a sigh and a final conclusion that she must be made as welcome as possible, she went to acquaint Mrs. Jumper that her Aunt Huldah was coming soon.

But exactly when she was coming she did not say, perhaps did not know herself, so Mrs. Jumper suggested that her mother write and ask her exactly when she might be expected, so that they could prepare for her.

A letter was accordingly dispatched the next day, sent about the same hour that Miss Bean started for New York.

As yet Mr. Jumper had not been informed of the intended visit, for it was considered useless to say anything to him on the subject until they knew just when she was coming.

But as a preliminary to the event, Mrs. Scratcher had been exceedingly amiable for a few days, trying to get on good terms with her son-in-law, so that her sister should not discover the skeleton in the family closet, but regard everything of an order most serene.

In fact, so exceedingly smiling and gracious was she, that Mr. Jumper half suspected that there was something coming, for her geniality was generally like a calm before a storm.

The next day both Mrs. Jumper and her

mother were out, and Mr. Jumper himself was somewhere about the premises, busy with his affairs, when a carriage drove up to the door, and out of it got a middle-aged woman, three dogs, several bundles, and an old-fashioned, hair-covered trunk, that looked as though time had worked upon it more than the baggage-smasher had, and that a bottle or two of hair restorer wouldn't have been wasted upon it.

In person, this lady was even more old-fashioned than her trunk was. She had thin features, a nose that looked like a boot, and a bonnet which seemed like a wilderness of fruits, feathers and flowers, surmounted by about a dozen corkscrew curls.

As for her family, it consisted of one small black-and-tan (her youngest), with an ulster, one shaggy poodle with pink bows, and one large, lazy pug, and an umbrella, O. F.

She rang the bells, commencing with the top floor first, which the servant of Professor Grimshaw answered in person.

"Does Mr. Jumper live here?" she asked, while her black-and-tan, Moses, tried to bite the girl's nose off.

"Yes, fust flure," replied she, slamming the door in her face, mad because she had been brought all the way down-stairs for nothing.

"Well, really, this is strange," she mused.

"Try the next bell," suggested the hackman, who just then mounted his box to drive away.

And so she did, ringing the next one to it, which was responded to by Mrs. Cutter's servant.

"Does Mr. Jumper live here?" she asked, and the dog barked savagely.

"I believe so, but not on my floor," replied the servant, slamming the door in her face.

"Goodness me! Well, I wonder where he does live, anyway? This is a nice way to be received. Guess I sha'n't stay here very long. Be quiet, Moses," she added, as she rang the next bell, causing a tintinabulation which aroused and finally brought the servant girl of Miss Vestvalia to the door.

"Is Mr. Jumper in?"

"How do I know? why don't you ring the right bell?" and once more was that front door slammed in the face of Aunt Huldah and her family.

Another trial brought down the colored boy of Dr. Buck.

"Does Mr. Jumper live here?"

"Yes'm, ring the first bell."

"First one which way—top or bottom?"

"The first one at the bottom," said he, closing the door firmly, but respectfully.

"Well, if this don't beat all creation. I do believe they are all afraid of me," said she, as she pulled lustily at Mr. Jumper's bell knob.

Mary O'Callahan responded this time.

"Mr. Jumper?"

"No."

"What! Doesn't he live here?"

"He do, mum, but I thought 'as how ye was axin' me war I Mr. Jumper."

"Is he in?"

"He is not."

"Is his wife in?"

"She is not."

"Or Mrs. Scratcher?"

"She is not."

"Well, I am sorry."

"I am not."

"I am Mrs. Scratcher's sister."

"Ther divil!"

"What is that you say?"

"I said as how ye war civil," muttered Mary.

"Are you the servant?"

"I am."

"Very well, be good enough to bring my trunk into the hallway and I will wait until some of them return. Come, Juno, come Serious," she called to her dogs. "Where is your reception-room?"

"In there," replied Mary, pointing to the door.

"Well, I'll just take a seat there and wait. Do you think they will be long away?"

"I think not, mum."

"Tell them that Miss Bean is here the moment any of them return."

"Miss Bane, is it?"

"No; Bean," she snuffled.

"Begob, but it's a string-bean she is, ony-how," mused Mary, as she went towards that hair trunk which was standing on its head on the stoop. "Phat the blazes sort av an animal is this, sure? Begorra, it has hair on it. Wonder will it bite? Whist!" she cried, kicking it, "no; it's as dead an' dry as she that owns it," continued she, picking it up by one of its iron handles. "I say, mum, what do yez feed it on?" she asked, as she let it fall heavily upon the marble-tiled floor.

"What is that you ask?" queried Miss Bean, looking from the reception-room door, while Moses barked savagely, and tried to sample the girl.

"What do yez feed it on?"

"What—my pets?"

"No; yer what-ye-call it out here," said Mary, pointing to the old hair trunk.

"That is a trunk; what do you mean?"

"Shure I thort it war aloive, an' I was after axin' ye what ye fed it on?"

"How stupid!"

"So it was, but yer know I didn't know but that it belonged to a h'elephant; seems as how it had hair on it."

"Go to your duties, girl, and remember what I told you about notifying any of the family, on their return, that I am here."

"All roight, mum. Shall I tell them as how ye have yer dorgs?"

"How absurd!"

"So I thort, mum."

"Go to the kitchen at once, girl."

"Ter onct I will, mum," said she, going.

"Well, I must say they employ an impudent servant, at all events," she mused, after being left alone.

Mary had a good laugh over the advent of Miss Bean. In fact, she was laughing when Mr. Jumper came into the kitchen soon after she herself got there.

"What are you laughing at, Mary?" he asked, looking at her curiously.

"At ther increase."

"At the what—increase?"

"Yes, faith," said she, laughing again.

"Increase of what, girl?"

"Yer family, Mr. Jumper."

"What the mischief do you mean? Are you mad, Mary?"

"No, but you soon will be."

"You speak in riddles. What do you mean?"

"Go inter the reception-room and see for yoursilf, Mr. Jumper."

His heart came up into his throat. What the dickens had happened now?

He looked at her in a comical, inquiring sort of a way, while she continued to laugh over the situation.

"Mary, explain yourself."

"Plaze go into the reception-room, an' ye'll see ther explanation."

"What the deuce——" he muttered, as he started for the room.

Before reaching it, however, his ears were assailed by the sharp barking of Moses, and the words of admonition from his mistress.

"Be quiet, Moses, or I shall be obliged to strike you real hard," said she, while the other two dogs lolled or yawned upon the floor.

He started back in surprise as he beheld the spinster and her dogs, and she, not knowing him, regarded him in wonder, although the dog, Moses, was evidently doing his best to introduce them.

"I—I beg pardon—but——" suggested he.

"Who might you be, sir?" she asked, as soon as she could quiet her dog.

"Well, I might be Commodore Vanderbilt, or a traveling preacher, but I fortunately, or unfortunately, happen to be plain and simple Skidmore Jumper," said he.

"Why, Skidmore Jumper!" she exclaimed, rushing towards him for a kiss or something.

Jumper retreated a step, but she followed him close.

"Skidmore Jumper, I'm your relation!"

"The deuce you are."

"Yes, kiss me," and this time she got so near to him that Moses succeeded in getting a grip on his ear, causing the astonished man to howl with pain.

"Oh—oh—oh!"

"What are you doing, Moses? I am really ashamed of you," said she, giving him just cuff enough to make the brute release poor Jumper's ear.

"Ashamed! I should think you would be, madame. Who are you?" said he, with his hand to his bitten ear.

"Why, I am Huldah Bean."

"Who the deuce is Huldah Bean?"

"Your own wife's aunt."

"Good gracious!"

"Sister of your mother-in-law."

Mr. Jumper groaned.

"Haven't you heard of me?"

"Don't recollect that ever I did."

"But didn't they tell you that I was coming?"

"No, I assure you, they never let me know how greatly I was to be honored."

"That is very strange."

"I think so, too. Where did you come from?"

"Baltimore. Aren't you glad to see me?"

"Oh, certainly—very."

"But you don't look so."

"Well, that's because we are not well enough acquainted yet. But I—I feel certain that I shall be awfully glad after a while."

"I hope so."

"And these?" he asked, pointing to the dogs.

"They are my pets, Skidmore. I never go anywhere without them. Why, do you know, they always eat at my table, just as though they were my children. And you ought to see some of the tricks they do."

"No, thank you. I know one of the tricks of that one," replied he, pointing to Moses, and wishing that he could fill him full of bird shot at four paces.

"Oh, I know you will like my pets. This one is Moses, this Juno, and this is Serious," said she, pointing to the pug.

"Happy to know you," said he, bowing with mock gravity. "In fact, I am delighted at knowing any of my wife's family."

"But where are your wife and mother?"

"I haven't the remotest idea, but the probability is that they have gone out walking."

"Do you think they will soon return?"

"I hope so."

"So do I, for it is dreadfully awkward to sit here and have nobody to welcome you, or ask you to take off your things."

"Yes, I dare say," but he never took the hint for all that. "Ah! here they come," he added, and as the door opened and they came in, he vanished through the other, and out into the kitchen for the purpose of bathing his bitten ear.

Mary was still on a broad-gauge grin.

"Why, Huldah Bean!" exclaimed Mrs. Scratcher.

"Why, Aunt Huldah!" chimed Mrs. Jumper.

"Dear me!" sighed Miss Bean, between the kissing which was exchanged.

"Why, we never expected you!"

"Never."

"What! never?"

"Well, hardly—that is to say, you did not state in your letter when you were coming, and I wrote you only yesterday to find out. But we are so glad to see you. Take off your things," she added, and in turning around, Mrs. Scratcher stepped on one of Juno's paws, and there was a howling instantly set up which prevented anything but the deaf and dumb language to be used during the next five minutes.

Mr. Jumper heard the racket, and it made him so mad that he kicked the house-cat.

Mary laughed and made a "break."

"Poor, dear Juno!" moaned Miss Bean, at the same time dropping Moses and catching up the yelling poodle.

"Three dogs!" exclaimed Mrs. Jumper, starting back and regarding her visitors in blank astonishment.

"Dear me, Huldah! What made you bring all of these dogs?"

"Why, do you suppose I would think of coming without them? Poor, darling Juno, did they abuse my dearest pet?" she added, taking the stepped-on paw tenderly in her hand.

Mrs. Jumper and her mother exchanged

glances, and Moses, suspecting further trouble, tried to crawl into Miss Bean's umbrella.

"Have you seen Mr. Jumper?"

"Yes, and he appeared to be so glad to see me that he never asked me to take off my things."

Mother and daughter again exchanged glances.

"Oh, but he is so dreadfully bashful, Aunt Huldah."

"Yes, I guess he is. But remember this, if my dogs are not welcome, I am not," she snapped.

"Oh, you are all welcome, of course. Wait until I call Skidmore in," said Mrs. Jumper, going out.

CHAPTER X.

OH, yes, Skidmore Jumper was a most delighted man when he learned that his wife's aunt and her three dogs had come to stay for an indefinite term of days or weeks with him, for besides being very much like her sister, his mother-in-law, she had those confounded dogs to complicate the doubtful peace of his domestic heaven.

But he was not only a thoroughly domestic man, but he loved peace and tranquillity, and would do everything in the world to encompass them, provided he was not crowded to the wall or stepped upon by somebody or something.

So when his wife sought him and attempted to mollify him in relation to Miss Huldah Bean, her aunt, who had come all the way from Baltimore to visit them, he repressed his rising nature like a truly great man, and said he would do the best he could to make it pleasant for the old maid and her dogs, that is, if she did not attempt to stay too long.

And so a home and hospital was given them for the time being, and Huldah and her dogs began to believe that life was almost as downy in New York as it was in Baltimore, only Mr. Jumper would not consent to the dogs occupying chairs at the table, as they had been used to do at home.

But the first one in the household to break out into open rebellion against Miss Bean's pets was Mary O'Callahan, the well-known servant girl of the Jumper establishment.

During the first two or three days these pets ran all over the house in perfecting their line of discoveries, while their mistress was getting right down to the business of finding out all about her sister's son-in-law, and the result was that they got some rather rough handling, although no one knew but the handlers who those handlers were.

Thus, Professor Grimshaw got Moses into his room to try an electrical experiment with him, the result of which was that the aforesaid black and tan, Moses, managed to escape before the experiment was half finished and ran howling down-stairs, alarming the whole house, and with his tail so closely ensconced between his hind legs that it did seem for the time being that he would never be able to recover it.

But nobody knew who had frightened her pet so, or by what means they had done it, and so Miss Bean, as she tried to soothe the darling as it lay in her lap, or tried to crawl up the sleeve of her dress, concluded that it had been attacked by a fit of dyspepsia—that the air of New York did not agree with her darling.

"The poor darling little lamb! It shall have a hard-boiled egg at once, and some more peppermint-candy," she said, soothingly.

So completely absorbed was she in the sorrows of Moses that she paid no attention for the moment to the whereabouts of the other two "darlings," the pug Serious, and that big bundle of curly hair known as Juno.

Now it so happened that Serious had gone upstairs somewhere, as though curious to find out what sort of fun it was that his companion Moses was having, and finally made his way into Mrs. Cutter's apartments, where he was at once recognized as belonging to the new acquisition of the landlord.

Mr. Jumper's niece, Bella Snell, was the first to encourage him into confidence.

"What a horrible brute," said she, "and Uncle Jumper says the three of them that she brought with her are perfect nuisances."

"I should say so," said Mrs. Cutter.

"Let's play a joke on him," suggested one of her young lady dressmakers.

"Yes—yes," suggested the others, they all being full of mischief and sympathy for the land-lord.

"I know what we'll do; I've seen the boys do it at school," said Bella, joyously.

"What is it?"

"Let's tie a tin pan to his tail!"

"Good!"

"Better take an old tomato can," suggested Mrs. Cutter, smiling.

"Why so?"

"Because it cannot be recognized, whereas perhaps a tin pan or kettle might be."

"That's so; but it won't make half the noise as the dog goes kiting down stairs."

"Well, we will take two of them, then."

"Yes, three!"

"Four!"

"Give him a dozen," suggested others.

This being arranged, the servant girl was directed to bring out all the old cans she had, for the purpose of ornamenting the caudal appendage of Miss Bean's pug.

Three of these were soon gotten upon a string, and the other end of it was made fast to the tail of Serious.

"Good doggie!" said the widow, patting his lazy-looking head.

"Nice doggie! Shall have some fun when he comes to New York," added Bella, as she tied the final knot.

But this knot evidently did not exactly suit the ideas of the lazy purp, and while they held him in position, he seemed to become uncommonly interested regarding the new sensation in the region of his rudder, and he tried hard to see what it was.

But this they had no notion of doing just then, and one of the girls ran out to look over the balusters to see if the coast was clear.

Reporting that it was, Serious was led out into the entry, while one of the young ladies carried the bunch of cans so that they would make no noise until all was ready.

Heading him towards down-stairs, the servant girl gave him a kick, and away he went, dragging the noisy cans after him.

Bumpity—bump—they fell upon the stairs, as that pug, now half frightened out of his wits, yelled all sorts of canine murder, and fled for dear life down flights of stairs, creating the worst racket that was ever heard in a nest of French flats anywhere.

Mr. Jumper's back entry door leading into the kitchen chanced to be open, and into it flew that yipping, yelping dog, frightening Mary, the servant girl, almost as badly as he was himself.

"Mother av Moses!" she exclaimed, leaping upon the stationary tubs, while the dog flew around the room like mad.

At first she did not recognize the animal, but supposing it to be one that had escaped from its tormentors in the street, she seized a pan of hot water and dashed it over him, just as Miss Bean flew wildly into the room, having recognized the wail of her child.

This warm bath had created even more trouble than the cans had done, and with an unearthly yip, the dog darted towards his mistress and tried to hide itself somewhere around the tops of her shoes.

But so demonstrative was he that almost simultaneous with his disappearance from sight, there was a pair of skinny shins flying in the air, mixed with muslin, tomato cans and a large amount of pug dog. In fact, she had fallen upon her pet, and it had become "Serious" business for him indeed.

Mr. Jumper and his wife, and mother, all rushed into the kitchen together.

He ran to pick her up, but the task had become so delicate by this time, owing to the mixing of string, cans, dog and things, that he instantly withdrew and left the task to the ladies.

"Mercy—mercy! What has happened?" asked Mrs. Scratcher, assisting her.

"Yes—yes, Aunt Huldah, what is it?"

"Help—help! Where is poor dear Serious?" she asked, rising upon her feet.

"Here he is; mercy, what is it?"



WITHOUT SAYING ANOTHER WORD SHE THREW THE BILLS IN HIS FACE, AND THEN HIT HIM ON THE NOSE WITH A BREAKFAST ROLL.

"Oh—oh—oh! I am going to faint!"

"Don't, please," said Mr. Jumper, returning to the room just then.

"I will, sir! Nobody shall prevent me from fainting," she snapped, red in the face.

"All right, then; go ahead. But what is it all about, anyhow?"

"Look there! Look at the terrible indignity that has been forced upon my poor pet."

"Who did it?"

"Oh, dear—oh, dear! Quick, cut the horrible things from his precious little tail."

A knife soon severed his connection with the tin cans, and upon examination it was found that the brute was more frightened than hurt, so far as the hot water was concerned, although that was no fault of Mary's, she having given him the hottest she had.

"Oh, I never was so insulted in my life!" said she, gathering the wet and trembling pug into her arms.

"Who did it, Mary?" asked Mr. Jumper, half smiling and half in earnest.

"Troth, sur, I don't know at all—at all. Ther fust thing I hearn was the divil's own racket on the stairs beyant av a dog yellin' murther an' ther loikes, an' tin cans a-rattlin' an' a-bangin', an' ther next I knowed in ran ther baste, an' commenced a-cuttin' up all over the kitchen. Sure, I thought he war mad wid hydrophoby, or somethin', an' I jumped up on the tubs an' threw hot wather on him, so I did."

"Oh, you horrible creature, you! How dared you do such a wicked thing?" screamed Miss Bean, wild with rage.

"Faix, an' do you think I'd be afther being aisy wid a mad dorg?"

"A mad dog!"

"Did you know whose dog it was, Mary?" asked Mr. Jumper, trying to look serious, while poor Serious was still keeping up his growl.

"Divil a wanst, for he was a skitin' about ther room, rollin' an' a tumblin' over an' over, mixin' himself up wid everythin'."

"Well, then, of course, you cannot blame the girl for doing as she did," suggested Jumper.

"Oh, you wretch! How can you excuse her? and besides, I half believe that she had a hand in the first outrage, just because I asked her to cook an egg for him this morning."

"Bad luck ter yer dirty baste, if yer tell me that, I'll cut ther whole tail off av him wid a kick, so I will," replied the spunky Irish girl, bristling up in an instant.

"Don't you dare to touch my dogs!"

"Won't I? Kape 'em out av the kitchen, then, or ye'll see whether I will or not."

"Mary, remain quiet," suggested Mrs. Jumper, softly.

"I say she is not to blame, Miss Bean, and if you don't see fit to agree with me, you know what you can do."

"But who can have done this outrage?"

"How should I know? Most likely he got out into the street, and some boys thought they would have some fun with him."

"A likely story, sir; the dog has not been out into the street, and I suspect some of your tenants of this gross outrage, sir. And I will never rest until I find out who it was and have them punished."

"All right; but please remember that I am the landlord here, and that I will have no disturbance in the house," said Mr. Jumper, firmly.

"Then, sir, I shall bring my visit to a sudden termination."

"The more sudden, Miss Bean, the better."

"Oh, I dare say: you did not want me to come here in the first place, and I am sorry that I ever did."

"So am I, Miss Bean, for one of the kind is all my house will hold," said he, turning and leaving the room.

"Sister, I shall go home this very day," said she, when they were left alone.

"No—no! Don't mind him; that is his way," put in Mrs. Jumper.

"His way, indeed! He is the man you said was so bashful. I should say he *was*."

"No—no; don't think of going home yet," said Mrs. Scratcher, as all three of them returned to the sitting-room.

"What! Stay here after I have been insulted? After my dogs have been abused? Not

much! No longer, in fact, than it takes me to get ready."

But they persuaded her after awhile to listen to reason, and as the dogs began to recover from the fright and rough usage they had received, she became a little more reconciled, and concluded to remain until the next day.

That was good for a fortnight longer if nothing happened.

As soon as Mary was left alone she began to laugh, and to manifest her delight in various ways, at the same time wondering who it was up-stairs that had done the business.

And as for the real culprits, they got all the fun out of the affair that it promised at first, and they laughed over it for an hour or more.

But as Mrs. Cutter's servant girl was on good gossiping terms with Mr. Jumper's girl, an excuse was contrived, after the excitement had died away, for her to go down and see what she could find out about it.

"Fut noise was it we heard just now?" she asked, after a little sparring.

"Sure we had a racket down her," replied Mary, laughing.

And then she proceeded to tell her about it.

"But who did it?"

"Troth, I don't know. Somebody up-stairs." The girl laughed heartily.

"Did yez do it?"

"Faix, an' if he hasn't enough yet, send him up-stairs for some more; I guess he'll get it."

"Good for ye. But I guess he has all he wants, an' ye can bet your last year's hoop-skirt that the ould woman won't let him out av her soight again roight away. Divil a thing I ever hearn better nor that," she added, with a hearty laugh, and the two servants parted in the best spirits.

Before night the whole thing was known through the entire house, and although all of the tenants had wondered much at the racket and noise that was kicked up, they all laughed in sympathy when the truth came out, for not one of them was there who did not hate both Miss Bean and her family of dogs.

But Miss Bean did not go—bless you, no.

She was fully put out about the way her dogs had been used, but it didn't put her out of the house, greatly to Mr. Jumper's disgust, although being a peaceful man when let alone, he said nothing about it, and acted as pleasantly as possible under the circumstances.

Two days afterward a stranger would never have known that there had ever been a storm in the house, and the three visiting dogs had regained their former animal spirits, although their mistress was careful not to allow them far out of her sight.

But as for Moses and Serious, it is safe to say that neither of them possessed any further desire to investigate the rooms in the upper part of the house after the warm experiences they had enjoyed.

And they were not very partial to the kitchen where Mary presided, for she had a playful way of "raising" them on the toe of her brogans whenever they happened to be nosing around within range of that No. 12 of hers.

Miss Bean of course spent much of her time going about the city, taking with her sometimes one and sometimes all three of her pets, as well as one or more of her relations.

Realizing the necessity of having her get through with her sight-seeing as quickly as possible, Mr. Jumper would occasionally unbend and accompany them to the theater or picture-gallery, making it a positive condition, however, that the dogs should be left home.

She and Mrs. Jumper were visiting the Academy of Design one day, and Moses accompanied them, although she could but admit that he had caused her more trouble than any dog she had.

On this occasion he did not redeem his character at all, but, on the contrary, got his mistress into still further trouble in this provoking, though natural way.

They were strolling through the different galleries looking at the pictures, when all at once Moses discovered a cat belonging to the janitor or somebody about the place, and in an instant there was a rush, a fierce barking and spitting,

followed by a clench and wild consternation among the visitors.

In vain Miss Bean attempted to call him away; but the cat somehow escaped the friendly, fondling embrace which the earnest black-and-tan was about to bestow, and then darted up upon a row of pictures, knocking several of them down; but anywhere for safety from the dog.

Moses barked, and Huldah called for him to stop and reform suddenly.

But a number of mischievous boys who chanced to be present, improved the shining hour by uttering little encouragements to Moses, such as "Sick 'em!" "Go for 'em!" and the like.

Moses was a sensitive sort of a dog, and hearing these encouragements quicker than he did the chidings and admonitions of his mistress, he put forth all the vim he had left for the purpose of making it lively for that cat.

The cat was consequently panic-stricken, and in the excess of her fear she leaped down from her uneasy perch on a lovely landscape, and cut for dear life in another direction.

But Moses was nearly as quick; and rushing wildly after her, barking and whining, he manifested the metal that was in him in a very demonstrative manner.

The cat cut hither and thither, closely followed by the dog, until, finally, seeing a possible chance for escape, she ran behind a lot of pictures that stood on the floor, and finally escaped out of sight and reach.

But in doing so she knocked over a very fine picture of a cat, painted by one of the first artists of America, and it was presented to the dog all of a sudden.

Moses had no eye for art, but he did have an eye and a taste for cats, and evidently believing that the picture was in reality the cat he was after, he seized it with avidity, thrusting his teeth through the canvas and shaking the picture right out of the frame in half of no time.

It might have been fun, of a certain kind, up to this point, but by this time the attendants and artists had come to the rescue, and one of them lifted Moses on the toe of his boot and landed him over the stair-rail, and he fell about ten feet below—sick.

Miss Bean ran to the rescue of her pup, giving a specimen of her jaw as she went and to everybody whom she met.

For about five minutes there was quite as lively a racket as was ever seen in a place of the kind, and she was about to get the best of them all, when the painter of the ruined "Tabby" came to the front and demanded one hundred dollars for his picture.

This placed an entirely different face on the matter, and the majority of those present, who had anything to say about the matter, held that the owner of the dog should pay for the ruined picture.

An argument quite half an hour long followed, but it was finally brought to a head by a suggestion of compromise, from somebody who thought that if Miss Bean paid fifty dollars down for the ruin of the picture, that the artist should call it square.

This was a bitter pill for Miss Bean, but she finally concluded to swallow it, and paying the money, she was released and started for home, all the time regarding herself as an injured party, and as full of indignation as an egg is full of meat.

It did not, however, teach her a lesson. On the contrary, she was bound to believe that the general public was pitted against dogs in general, and her dogs in particular.

The matter was talked over at dinner, and although Mr. Jumper appeared to sympathize with his mother-in-law's sister, yet he gloated secretly over the fact that one of her dogs had made her sick.

Well, that was all very well; but he had not yet gotten rid of her, and those dogs were just as lively as ever, and he, at the warm suggestion of Mrs. Jumper, had agreed to do the best he could, and make it as pleasant as he could for his wife's aunt.

How long this might have lasted, or how amiable Mr. Jumper might have been, had not cer-

tain things occurred, may, perhaps, never be known.

But one afternoon, those three dogs, who were prowling about the house, started up a big rat which they had discovered in the kitchen.

Mary was at first alarmed, but recovering herself, she attempted to drive the whole pack out of her domain with a broom.

But they were well after the rat and could not be frightened, and meantime they were filling the house with their barking, making a perfect pandemonium of noise, as well as raising the mischief with the kitchen furniture.

Finally, she discovered the rat they were after, and being naturally antagonistic to this species of animation, she encouraged them on, and with her broom made it awkward for the rodent whenever he came in her way, and attempted to seek the shelter that a rat-hole grants, both for himself, his cousins, and his aunts.

Mr. Jumper heard the commotion, and was just on the point of investigating the cause thereof.

He opened the door leading to the kitchen, when he got a "swat" in the face from the broom which Mary held in her hand, and was wielding vigorously, and which nearly knocked him sprawling.

"Mary! What is it?" he cried.

"Stand clear!" said she, while all three of the dogs were yelping, and to all appearances trying to trip him up.

"Of what?"

"The rat!"

"Rat!" yelled Jumper

"Rat!" echoed his wife, mother and aunt, and in less time than it would take a rat to "point" his tail twice, all three of them had leaped into chairs, and had gathered their skirts closely around them.

"Oh—oh! take it away!" they all cried at once, and Jumper rushed for his cane, for the purpose of knocking that rodent out of time.

But by this the rat had gotten into the parlor, and the dogs were making it exceedingly lively for him, especially Moses, who was naturally antagonistic to such vermin.

Meantime Miss Bean was trying to call off her dogs, fearing the rat might harm them in some way, and a greater confusion, as they chased the rat from corner to corner, was never heard anywhere.

"Help—help!" shouted the ladies.

"Sick 'em—sick 'em!" cried Mary, who, broom in hand, was trying to help them capture the interloper.

"Go for him!" shouted Jumper, slashing about the room with his cane, bent on rodent blood and fur.

"Don't—don't!" cried his wife and mother.

"Moses, Juno, Serious! Stop, I say! What are you doing?" asked Miss Bean.

"Sick 'em!" shouted Mary, following up the rat quite as close as the dogs did.

"Bite him!" yelled Jumper, encouraging the dogs with all his might and main, at the same time banging at it with his cane, but damaging only one or two mirrors, and a few articles of *bric-a-brac* which chanced to get in the way.

Meantime the females were screaming at the top of their voices, and the dogs were barking at the top of theirs, while the rat was doing some very fine work by way of eluding his enemies.

Finally Mary closed the door by way of making the escape of the rat wholly problematical, and this was just what insured fun.

The dogs chased him around the room a dozen times or more, but at each turn he eluded them. There were too many dogs, and not half rat enough to go around. But there was quite enough of him to keep Jumper busy, and at the same time to keep his females yelling at the top of their voices.

Mary and Jumper were doing all they could to make it lively for Mr. Rat, in addition to what the dogs were doing, although they were smashing things all around the room.

Finally Jumper cornered the rat. He went for him with his cane, but, of course, he missed him, and hit a dog. That was a natural consequence, and while the canine was howling from

pain, the rodent took advantage of the situation and ran up Jumper's trousers leg.

Then there was music and dancing; Jumper furnished both.

Dropping his cane, he seized the rat that was now half way up his trousers leg.

"Help—help—help!" he cried.

"Save, oh! save my dogs!" moaned Miss Bean, evidently thinking her pets were in danger.

But matters were right down to a business point now, and while the others shouted for assistance, Jumper was trying to assist himself, that is to say, he was trying to choke the rat to death, while he danced around the room like mad, and the dogs were trying to assist him with the imprisoned rat.

He finally succeeded in killing it, but he was the maddest man ever known. Those dogs must go! Yes, and the owner of them must light out. What had he not suffered from them?

CHAPTER XI.

It took fully an hour for things to get in any way settled after the rat episode, and even then Mr. Jumper was in a furious passion.

That rat had taken refuge up his trousers leg, and had bitten him severely while he was endeavoring to crush the life out of him.

But here was the fact: had it not been for those dogs, the whole thing would never have occurred, and had it not been for Miss Bean the dogs would never have been domiciled beneath the roof of Skidmore Jumper.

She must go! There was no other alternative, and he at once began to explain matters to her.

"But how can you blame me, you inconsiderate, unjust man?" she demanded.

"Blame you, madame!" he exclaimed, madder than ever to think she should interpose a single objection to the soft impeachment.

"Yes, what fault was it of mine? Why not lay the blame to your servant girl there? She it was who undoubtedly got my dear pets after the horrible rat, for she came in here with them."

"Whist, now, ould lady!" said Mary, shaking her finger at her.

"Old what!" screamed Miss Bean.

"Well, I said 'ould lady.' But if I made a mistake I axes yer pardon," replied the girl, with mock gravity.

"Mary!" exclaimed both Mrs. Jumper and her mother.

"I don't care. She naden't lay her ould dorg scrape ter me."

"Mary, return to the kitchen," said Mr. Jumper, in a mollifying tone.

"So I will, sur; but lave her kape her ould tongue off me, or I'll knock her two eyes inter wan, an' punch her false teeth down her ugly throat, so I will," was her parting shot at Miss Bean, as she returned to the kitchen.

"Oh! that horrible Irish person! Why do you keep her in your employ?"

"Well, she is right. What had she to do with the matter, anyhow? She merely joined in the chase for the rat, which your dogs started from somewhere. And that brings me back to what I first said—if it had not been for your confounded nuisances, there would have been no trouble, anyway," said Mr. Jumper.

"Nuisances?"

"Yes, nuisances."

"And, perhaps, there would have been no rat had it not been for my dogs," she sneered.

"Don't, Skidmore," said his wife, coaxingly.

"Oh, let him go on. Let him abuse your aunt, your dear mother's sister, all he wants to," said she, hunting for her handkerchief.

"I tell you, I am the master of my own house, and that I will have my own way."

"Certainly. Who said you should not?"

"I will not allow anybody to say so."

"Nobody wants to, sir."

"I don't care whether they do or not. There has been nothing but unquiet and unrest here ever since you came to the house, and now I want you to leave," said he, firmly.

"Oh, I expected it."

"And I have been hoping for it for a long time. I now insist upon your going at once. Do you understand me?"

"Oh, yes, I understand you."

"And that I mean what I say?"

"Oh, certainly."

"Then act upon it at once. Your sister is just as much of a nuisance as I can stand," he added, going from the room.

"The horrible thing! Sister, I don't see how you live with him; and as for you, I don't envy you for being his wife," said she.

Without a word Mrs. Jumper turned and left the room. Then Miss Bean and Mrs. Scratcher consulted, but after all, it was concluded best that she should go; and then followed the tearful packing of that old hair trunk.

But there was no alternative. Skidmore Jumper's spinal column was curved upwards, and Mrs. Scratcher knew very well that it would take more than ordinary manipulation to straighten it again.

So the next train which left New York for the South bore away Miss Bean and her family of assorted dogs, leaving Mr. Jumper comparatively happy, although he still had a mother-in-law.

Mary was so delighted over the departure that she went out for a pitcher of beer, outside of which to celebrate the event, and when the requisite spirit had been worked up, Mrs. Scratcher went into the kitchen to see what all the noise and racket was about.

There was Mary holding her dress up quite high and dancing an Irish reel.

The old lady held up her hands in astonishment.

"Whoop!" the girl would let off every moment, as she went through the figure of her dance, or "pasted" it down upon the floor.

"Why, Mary!" exclaimed Mrs. Scratcher.

"Whoop!"

"What on earth is the matter with you?"

"Whoop! I'm after celebratin', so I am," and again she whooped and continued her dance.

"Are you crazy, girl?"

"Yis, wid deloight."

"Over what?"

"Ter think that ould maid sister av yours has gone; whoop!"

"Mary, you ought to be ashamed of yourself."

"Be jabbers, but it's proud av mesilf I am; an' if yersilf wud only clear out, faix I'd have a pint av beer ivery day for a six months."

"You are a good-for-nothing, impudent thing; a perfect——"

She didn't finish the compliment; for just at that point she began to dodge a pan of potatoes which flew towards her like bullets from a Gatling gun. In fact, she didn't stop to hear any of the vocal accompaniments to the vegetable shower, but she "skipped out" with remarkable alacrity.

"Bad luck ter ye! Don't ye be afther coming inter my apartment wid any av yer slang," said Mary, after which she resumed her dancing, and continued to have a good time all by herself.

But of course Mrs. Scratcher reported the affair to both Mr. Jumper and his wife, for if there was one thing that would have made her heart glad more than another, it would have been the discharge of this girl Mary, between her and whom there was a gulf of hate.

But Mr. Jumper, as usual, took the part of his servant, as against the mother-in-law.

"It seems very strange, not to say suspicious, that you are always so ready to take that girl's part against me," said she.

"It does, eh?"

"Yes, it does. Either you must love her very much and hate your wife's mother in exact ratio, or you do it to torment me."

"Well, madame, if I loved that girl as much as I hate *you*, it would be as dangerous to have her in the house as it is uncomfortable to have you in it," replied Mr. Jumper, bitingly.

"Indeed!"

"Exactly!"

"Now please don't, Skidmore," said his wife, appealingly.

"He can't help it, my child. He can't help being a brute, so let him go on."

"I cannot help my feelings towards you."

"Of course not. They must, of course, be perfectly natural to one of your kind."

"Well, have it your own way, if that will only keep your tongue quiet. But I think I see a way out of all this," he added.

"You do?"

"Yes, and I regard the hope as a blessed one."

"What do you mean, Skidmore Jumper?"

"Oh, that is my secret as yet."

"I suppose you expect to turn me out of doors," she sneered.

"Oh, no, I never had such a notion, although I have often wished that I did have the nerve to do it."

"Well, if you ever did have such an idea, I warn you not to attempt it, for I won't go one step—there now."

"All right; but keep out of the kitchen and mind your own business."

"Oh, yes; I'll keep away from your kitchen queen," she sneered.

"I guess it would be the healthiest way," he replied, going from the room.

"What can he mean?" she asked her daughter.

"I am sure I don't know. But I am so tired of hearing you two contend," said Mrs. Jumper.

"Contend! I never contend, and you know it. There never was a more peaceable person in the world than I am. You know I am a woman of very few words, and anybody in the world can get along with me. But he is a dreadfully tantalizing man to get along with. He always did hate me, and he is forever doing something to torment."

"Well—well, you must admit that you are quite as tantalizing as he is."

"Why, Martha Jane!"

"I don't wish to offend you, ma."

"But only think of what you said!"

"How?"

"Why, you actually insinuated that your mother was a mischief-maker."

"Did I?"

"Certainly. Oh, that I should have ever lived long enough to hear such a word from my own flesh and blood."

"But, ma, you will not let him alone."

"What! Me? I always keep as far from him as possible."

"But you talk to him, ma."

"Well, haven't I a right to talk?"

"Yes, but you have also a right to choose your words."

"Nonsense, child; he is no friend of your poor dear mother's, and he says now that he thinks he sees his way out of the situation which he calls terrible."

"Yes, he said so."

"And that he held it as a secret."

"Well?"

"Wherever there is a secret there is something wrong, depend upon it," said Mrs. Scratcher, with great vehemence.

"Oh, Skidmore wouldn't do anything wrong."

"He wouldn't?"

"Don't I know him?"

"Well, what did he mean, anyhow?"

"Of course I do not know."

"But I do!"

"What do you think, ma?"

"That he intends to throw me out upon the cold world; yes, the cold—cold world!" and the old angel buried her face in her hands.

"No, I will not believe that. I know Skidmore Jumper too well for that. He gets very indignant, but, after all, he is very soft-hearted, and almost anything can be done with him."

"I fear not; and a dark cloud seems to be settling upon me, my child."

"Ma, nothing dark shall settle upon you while I live. While I have a home you shall have one, remember that," said Mrs. Jumper.

"Oh, my child!"

This she exclaimed in a very dramatic sort of a way, and the two females buried themselves in each other's embraces.

"Oh, ma!"

"Oh, my child!"

And they wept together variously.

Meantime where was Mr. Jumper?

He was working a "racket."

"What was it?" do you ask?

I'll tell you.

Mr. Jumper had suffered so long at the hands of his mother-in-law that he resolved on something desperate.

Somebody else had got to suffer.

He concluded that he had suffered long enough, and that somebody had got to come in as a sacrifice.

So he looked around among those whom he could select a victim from.

There was Deacon Elisha Budd. He was a deacon of the church where his wife and mother-in-law attended, and from which the sewing circle emanated, that same circle that had given him so much trouble, on account of a very lively young school-marm, Miss Kelsey.

Now Deacon Budd had a few thousand dollars worked into this world's goods, and his great object was to find a female of the right age who possessed as much, or he wouldn't be offended if she had a little more.

Mr. Jumper made himself very near to Deacon Budd, through mutual friends; whenever he could get a chance, he would expatiate upon the virtues of his mother-in-law, and say what a fortune she would be to the man who won her; to say nothing of the few thousands she had safely stowed away in one of the safest saving banks in New York.

Deacon Budd became at once greatly interested in Mrs. Scratcher, just as Mr. Jumper hoped and believed he would, and the very next Sunday night he manifested a portion of that interest by edging up to her after the services were over and asking her if he might have the joys of this world crowned by being her escort home.

Mrs. Scratcher was taken aback, of course, and like a giddy young thing of sixteen or eighteen, she blushed and stammered dreadfully.

"Why, Deacon Budd!" she said, almost hysterically.

"Mrs. Scratcher, may I see you home?"

"Why, deacon, y—yes, of course. How could I object?" she asked, sliding her arm into the crook which the deacon presented to her.

"What a beautiful night it is, Mrs. Scratcher."

"Delightful, deacon, very moonish."

"Very," and with this they started homeward.

"What a powerful sermon Elder Pounder gave us to-night!"

"Dreadfully powerful, deacon, especially that part of it where he said that it was not good for man to be alone," she replied.

"Yes, Mrs. Scratcher, and between you and I, I do not think it a whit worse for man to be alone than it is for a woman," said the deacon, hugging her bony arm up to him, as they walked along.

"Deacon Budd, you are a man."

"I—I trust so."

"And what do you know of the tender feelings of a woman, deacon?"

"Mrs. Scratcher, I have been once married, as you doubtless know."

"True, but you are still a man; and as such, what do you know, or, rather, what do you realize of the tender emotions of the female heart?" and she sighed like a rusty hinged gate.

"True, too true, Mrs. Scratcher," said the deacon, shaking his head, sadly.

"You have three children, deacon?"

"Three goodly boys!"

"Yes: I know it. Oh! how I have felt for those children of yours, deacon, since I knew they were motherless! And, do you know, deacon, they always seemed to take to me?"

"Not the slightest doubt of it. Why not?"

"Well, that I can scarcely answer, unless it was because they felt the need of a mother."

"Exactly."

"Yes, undoubtedly."

"And they must have seen in you the very ideal of a mother."

"Do you think so, deacon?" she asked, quickly.

"Why, of course, else why did they take to you so quickly?"

"Deacon Budd, perhaps you are right. Children always took to me, right heartily," said she, pressing up against him, warmly.

"How could they help it, Mrs. Scratcher?"

and as the old deacon said so, he drew her arm closer within his.

"Oh, deacon, you men are such flatterers!"

"No, Mrs. Scratcher, we are so appreciative."

"Perhaps you are right. But, as I said before, I was always so taken with your children, even more than they seemed to be taken with me. And I feel how much they need a mother, poor things!"

"Yes, Mrs. Scratcher, you have a very sharp penetration. They do feel the want of a mother's care, perhaps almost as much as I do the want of a partner in my lonely life."

"Oh, Deacon Budd!" and she actually bowed her head upon his shoulder.

"I—I hope you know how it is yourself," said he, with melting fondness in his tone.

"Oh, deacon, I do feel as though I had met with a great loss, and that I was only one-half of a pair of shears."

"How poetic and philosophic!"

"I feel that I am perishing day by day for the want of somebody to pet me."

"Oh, Widow Scratcher!"

"Yes, Deacon Budd!"

"What a shame!"

"Yes."

"But maybe there is somebody who would only be too anxious to pet you, if you would only allow him to do so, Mrs. Scratcher."

"No, I cannot believe it."

"Why not, pray?"

"Because my life is destined to be dark—a sort of social and matrimonial night, succeeding the happiness of a few years ago, before I became—alas! a widow."

"Do not say that, Mrs. Scratcher."

"Oh, I can't help it. Nobody loves me!" and she actually worked up a joint or two of hysterics.

"Oh, Widow Scratcher!" he sighed.

"Oh, Deacon Budd!" she murmured.

"How can you say so?"

"Oh, I feel it, deacon!"

"What?"

"My terrible and almost unendurable loneliness, Deacon Budd."

"But would you—"

"What, deacon?"

"Well, that is to say, if somebody was to offer you his hand and heart—"

"Oh, deacon! but it would depend so much upon who it was; yes—oh, yes!" and the pretty little sigh she let forth was perfectly heart-rending.

"But—supposing—"

"What, deacon?"

"That it was—"

"Who, deacon?"

"Myself!"

"Oh, deacon!"

"What would you say?"

"Oh, deacon!"

"No, but about the proposition."

"I—should say—be still, my heart—I should—well, my heart would speak—and it would say, yes, deacon."

"Oh, dear Mrs. Scratcher!"

"Oh, deacon!" and at this point they came almost to hugging each other.

Mr. Jumper was following at a convenient distance, and he concluded that his plot was working well.

"You have made me so happy, Mrs. Scratcher."

"Have I, deacon?"

"Oh, yes—oh, yes!"

"And I cannot keep the secret of my own heart—deacon, you have made me very, very happy," and she sighed real hard.

In this way they worked themselves home, that is, to Mrs. Scratcher's home, and there they stood, like two young spoonies, for at least half an hour, talking all sorts of nonsense.

But that settled it. Mr. Elisha Budd and Mrs. Josiah Scratcher became engaged that night, she believing him to be rich, and he fondly dreaming of a life of ease after marrying her.

And Mr. Jumper knew all about it.

And Jumper was happy, although he did not tell anybody but himself just how happy he was, yet he felt exceedingly good.

For if things worked to fruition as they were

working now, he would not only get rid of his mother-in-law, but at the same time revenge himself upon Deacon Budd, who had cheated him on three or four occasions when they had transactions together.

From that night Deacon Budd came every evening, and stayed later and later on every occasion, until finally it got so that he could go home in the morning by the bright light.

Meantime, Mrs. Scratcher became exceedingly independent, and put on more airs than ever around the house, except to Mary, and hinted that she would soon be in a position which would render her wholly independent of any of her relations.

Mr. Jumper knew what it meant, but he never gave it away, only hoping all the while that nothing would intervene to throw down the little image that he had begun to model in clay.

But of course the old lady could not exist without telling somebody, and who sooner than her daughter, Mrs. Jumper? But it was told under a most solemn pledge of secrecy, because she said she didn't want Mr. Jumper to know anything about it.

"Not for the world, my child, would I have him know of the tender relations which exist between us, for you know how he dislikes me, and it would be just like him to contrive some way to break it up."

"Oh, I don't know," was all Mrs. J. could say.

"Ah, but I know him. If he thought the deacon and I loved each other, and were on the point of getting married, it would be just like him to say something to him about me that might discourage the dear man. But I have already put him on his guard against him, so that the worst he might do would not take the good man by surprise."

Mrs. Jumper made no reply, but she thought to herself that her husband would be the last person in the world to oppose it. However, she gave the required promise of secrecy, and it was understood that the affair was first to be broken to the son-in-law when he saw them marching up the church aisle to be married before the congregation.

To his niece Bella, who still boarded with Mrs. Cutter, on the fourth floor, he hinted that the probabilities were greatly in favor of her returning to live with him again in a short time when the wicked ceased from troubling and relations were at rest.

And as for Deacon Budd, he was quite as anxious to bring about the marriage as either Mr. Jumper or his mother-in-law was. Not that he was over head and ears in love with her, but rumors had reached him, coming directly from Mr. Jumper, he felt certain that the old angel was worth at least fifty thousand dollars in her own right, and he very much needed a fortune of that dimensions to fall back upon in his old age.

But Mr. Jumper most likely knew his business when spreading those rumors, and if he did not suspect that the bait would tempt the old deacon, he could probably excuse himself by claiming that she was worth that sum for some purposes.

However, matters glided along quite satisfactorily, although Mrs. Scratcher grew more and more independent around the house every day, and gave a deal of talk to her son-in-law that was intended to be, and under other circumstances would have been, exceedingly irritating.

This was given with a sort of a defiant air, but our landlord only smiled at it and made no reply, a fact which would sometimes greatly annoy her, and at others lead her to conclude that she had fairly triumphed over and broken his spirit of resistance and insubordination.

But she did not relinquish her watchfulness over him in the least, notwithstanding she was soon to be married and leave him, for she evidently regarded this as a portion of her mission, and although it annoyed him exceedingly, he still found consolation in the thought that he should soon be free from her, and that his old enemy, Deacon Budd, would catch it quite as hard in the future; in fact, take the burden from his neck.

One evening, however, a month or so after matters were fixed, he came very near losing his temper entirely.

It was on the evening of the Fourth of July, and there was a brilliant display of fireworks in various parts of the city, and as his house was at least three stories higher than any in the neighborhood, it was agreed that a station on the roof would be the best location for seeing the "sarpints an' things."

Now Mrs. Scratcher had come to the same conclusion, and made up her mind to invite the deacon up there where they could be all by themselves.

Mrs. Jumper had gone to spend the day out of town, and Mr. Jumper concluded that the best thing he could do for Bella and those in the house who chose to take advantage of the opportunity, was to unlock the big scuttle and take them all up there.

Among those who accepted the invitation were Bella, Mrs. Cutter and Miss Vestvalia, the actress who lived on the third floor, the others going in different directions, or being out of town.

Now, Mr. Jumper was naturally gallant, and if the ladies were, or pretended to be, timid on account of the height, and felt better while leaning upon his arm, what harm was there in his allowing them to do so?

Mrs. Scratcher was not long in finding out the matter, and she was mad enough to scream. A fine evening's courting and sight-seeing was thereby knocked endwise, and she panted for revenge. She looked cautiously up on the roof, and saw the ladies grouped trustingly around her son-in-law. Her naturally loving disposition at once asserted itself in her bosom, and silently she shut down the scuttle and locked it, after which she sought the deacon and told him how many people were on the roof, and suggested going elsewhere to see the fireworks, saying nothing, however, of the trick she had played on Jumper.

The display being over, he started to escort the ladies down-stairs, when, lo! there was no escape but in jumping to the ground.

"Oh! my prophetic soul! my mother-in-law!" breathed Mr. Jumper, aghast at the situation.

CHAPTER XII.

THE situation of Mr. Jumper and his friends upon the roof of his house, where they had been looking at the display of fireworks on that Fourth of July evening, was certainly not a pleasant one.

It will be remembered that his mother-in-law, Mrs. Scratcher, had set her heart upon occupying this very position of advantage in company with Deacon Budd, to whom she was engaged to be married (for Mr. Jumper's benefit, and to carry out a plot of his own to get rid of her).

"What is it, Mr. Jumper?" asked Miss Vestvalia.

"I—I—we—that is—I—" he stammered.

"We are what?" asked Mrs. Cutter.

"What is it, Uncle Jumper?" asked Bella.

"Well, some one has locked the scuttle, and here we are on the top of the roof!"

"Heavens, I shall swoon!" said the actress.

"Don't! Please don't, it's too high up," said Jumper, in great distress.

"Well, come to think of it, it is rather high for one to make a graceful 'fall.' But what is to be done?"

"We shall have to alarm somebody below."

"That will be impossible, for Professor Grimshaw and his folks have gone, and there is nobody on my floor," said Mrs. Cutter.

"And no one on mine," said the actress.

"Shall we be obliged to wait up here until somebody returns?" asked Mrs. Cutter earnestly.

"Well, I—I fear we shall," said he.

"Oh, I don't care, I think it is awfully jolly up here with Uncle Jumper," said Bella, clinging rompingly to his arm.

"Well, yes, so do I, but supposing you have an engagement with somebody else's uncle at this particular time?" asked Mrs. Cutter.

"Yes, it is half-past nine, the very hour I promised to meet my dear Alphonso in my parlor down-stairs. What shall I do?" cried the actress, with great dramatic effect.

"And my Alonzo will swear that I have gone off with some other man," said the widow.

"He wouldn't have it exactly right in that case if he did, for you have gone up with another," replied Bella, laughing.

"Ladies, I am exceedingly sorry for you all," said Mr. Jumper.

"Not the slightest doubt about it, Mr. Jumper, but how is your sorrow going to assist us down?"

"Who could have played us such a scurvy trick?"

"I think I know," said Bella.

"Hush, my girl, for family reasons. If I could only arouse the elevator boy," he added.

Now the fun of the thing was that this very elevator boy was at that moment crouched down behind one of the chimneys, he having stolen up after the party for the sake of seeing the fireworks, and being locked up with the others.

So of course all the pounding which Mr. Jumper did upon the roof for the sake of attracting the boy's attention all went for nothing, although there could be no doubt but that he heard it, or that he drew himself into the smallest space possible to escape his employer's observation.

During the next half hour both Mr. Jumper and the ladies did everything in their power to attract attention, and finally succeeded in getting into conversation with a gentleman on a roof on the opposite side of the street, and who finally got Dr. Buck's servant to understand that Mr. Jumper and a party of ladies were on the roof, fastened out.

The doctor was at home, and he at once proceeded to the scuttle, where he soon became the means of liberating the party, although the climb up the many flights of stairs had nearly winded him.

"Oh!—oh! thanks, doctor, thanks," they all said, as they began to scramble down the stairs, the elevator boy with the rest, though scarcely noticed.

"How did it happen?"

"Somebody fastened us up there for a joke, I suppose, but how very contemptible," said the actress.

"I should say so. But where is the elevator boy, Mr. Jumper?"

"Isn't he in the car?"

"No; I rang several times for him, and finally had to walk up," said the doctor.

"Too bad. I wonder where he is?" and Jumper started to go towards the elevator.

But the boy was too quick, for keeping well out of sight behind the others, and the place was scarcely lighted, anyhow, he managed to reach a position where he could respond when his employer called his name.

In answer to questions as to where he had been when the doctor rang the bell, he said he must have fallen asleep, and as the night was hot and sultry, the boy escaped with only a slight reprimand, as he took in his load of passengers and began to scatter them about on the various floors below.

Mr. Jumper finally reached his own; when alone, he could scarcely contain himself from exploding over his pent-up wrath and shame which his mother-in-law had occasioned him. Oh, how he longed for Deacon Budd to take that angel off his hands!

Mrs. Scratcher returned in company with the deacon at about half-past ten, after which there was about an hour's earnest courting put in by mutual consent.

Mr. Jumper did not dare to trust himself alone with her at the breakfast table the next morning, for fear that he might say something that would wound the tender sensibilities of the dear creature. So he informed Mary, the servant, that he should not be home to breakfast, and started out in search of it.

But the old lady was on hand herself, for she made it a point to never miss a meal, or a chance for a riot. There was a smile on her face that was scarcely angelic, and evidently not an emanation from the blissful courting she had participated in the evening before, but more likely on account of that trick and revenge on her son-in-law.

She took her daughter's place at the table,

and calmly awaited Skidmore's approach, but seeing that he was unusually backward in coming forward, she called to Mary for information respecting her lord and master.

"He's out," said she, almost spitefully.

"Out—out where?"

"Out av the house, sure."

"Where did he go?"

"Out for his breakfast."

"Why did he do that, when here is a good meal in readiness for him?"

"He said, sure, that he couldn't ate where ye war—that ye tuck away his appetite."

"Did he say that, Mary?" demanded the irate angel, striking the table with her fist so hard that it made the china rattle.

"He did, an' I don't wonder at it."

"You don't! Mary, Mr. Jumper's friendship for you has made you very impudent to me. But there is a consolation in knowing that I shall not have to bear it long. Return to the kitchen."

"So I will, for I cudn't ate me grub where ye are no more nor can Mr. Jumper," said she, leaving the room.

"The impudent hussy! I wonder if he did tell her that? I guess he suspects that I shut him out upon the roof last night, and is so mad that he has no appetite. I must find out how he managed to get down. But it served him right, anyhow, for what business had he to take possession of that roof when I had it all arranged for myself and Deacon Budd? I'll show him, if he has not already found out, that I have some rights here, as well as he," and then she commenced to eat her breakfast. "But there's one thing I should have missed if we had gone upon the roof instead of going out to walk, and that was a delicious plate of ice cream. Oh! how tenderly he asked me if I would dissipate. How attentive he was all through, and how he feels the near approach of our wedding-day when he can call me all his own! And hereafter I shall be mistress of my own house, with no one to molest and make afraid. Yes—yes," she mused, as she proceeded to fire up for the day.

After breakfast she went out in company with a dressmaker to purchase a wedding-dress and other belongings for that interesting event, and Mr. Jumper returned an hour or so afterward.

"Where is the old angel, Mary?" he asked, meeting the girl in the sitting-room doing up her work.

"Troth, she went out wid the dressmaker."

"Ah! she did, eh?" he asked, eagerly.

"So she did."

Mr. Jumper actually forgot his dignity, and cut a caper about the room, greatly to the astonishment of the servant girl.

"It is working—it is working!" he exclaimed, delightedly.

"Faith, I think it is," mused Mary, thinking that her master had been drinking, and that the liquor was working.

"Mary, can you keep a secret?"

"I can, if it isn't as hot as a baked pratie," said she, with a half serious, half comical expression, and thinking that Mr. Jumper was about to intrust her with the secret of his drinking.

"Well, this one is red hot. In fact, it is so hot that I can't hold it any longer all to myself, and if you will help me keep it, I know you will enjoy it quite as much as I do, being indirectly interested in it."

"I'll never give it away, sir."

"Sure? Never tell anybody until I tell you you may do so?"

"Niver, faix," said she, resolutely.

"Well, then, the old angel is going to be married!" said he, approaching near enough to whisper the words.

The effect upon the girl was electric. Dropping her broom, she started back almost overcome.

"Fact!"

"Howly mother av Moses!" she exclaimed.

"Hush!"

"Och! I'm spacheless entoirely."

"Careful now, and don't say a word for the world, for she thinks I do not know it, when, in fact, I put up the job to get her off my hands."

"Well, as they soy in Oireland, that takes

ther rag off ther bush! Who is ther poor man as is goin' ter marry her?"

"Hush; Deacon Budd!" said he, whereat Mary fell back into a chair, and laughed loud, long and heartily. "Sure, war the loikes av it iver hearn afore?"

"Such good luck to me was never heard of before, provided it goes through all right."

"But think av ould Budd."

"That's *his* look out."

"Faix, but that's the foinest bit av news that I iver hearn in my loife."

"So it is. Now she has undoubtedly gone out with the dressmaker to buy her wedding things."

"When does it come off?"

"In about a month, I believe."

"More power ter her! Whoop! I'd give a month's wages, so I wud, ter see the ould gal go off."

"Don't say a word, and you shall see it."

"Faix, it's very thankful ye ought ter be, sur."

"Thankful! Why, I never felt so good about anything in my life, and when it comes off, I am going to give a grand party, to celebrate the event, to the people living in the house, servants and all, since she has had a row with them all."

"Good! But, Mither Jumper, it's the hottest sacrit that I iver had in my buzzum."

"But you must keep it just as you promised."

"Och, niver fear but I will."

Thus relieved of a portion of the burden he had been carrying so long, Mr. Jumper went about his business in a much happier frame of mind, while Mary continued to work and laugh over the matter.

"Poor ould Budd!" she would murmur once in awhile, "I wonder does he think he's afther gettin' an angel? Be me sowl, she'll take out what little hair he has left afore ther honeymoon has got sour, which won't be a great while, I'm afther thinkin'. But it was smart in ther master ter get rid av her in that way, an' I wudn't spake a worrud for fear ther thing moight be broke up somehow."

From that time out things went most beautifully. Mrs. Scratcher, confident in her future position, and confident, also, in her belief that her son-in-law had "weakened," and that she could do with him about as she liked, queened it about the place over everybody, always excepting Mary, the servant-girl; and as Mr. Jumper saw fit not to resist or contend, there was peace, simply because there was no one to break it.

As for Jumper, he felt so full of goodness that he would not have quarreled with a pet rabbit. Matrimony for his mother-in-law was his chief object in life at present.

And his wife appeared to entertain the matter in the same light, for although she did not come boldly out and acknowledge that she knew all about it, yet by all her actions she seemed to say: "A great load is about to be lifted."

Day followed day, and the matter became nearer and nearer at hand, and yet Mrs. Scratcher made no allusion to the thing. Nor did Deacon Budd, who was evidently already under the influence of his future wife.

But Mr. Jumper knew it all the same, and went on with his little preparations in a quiet sort of a way for celebrating the event he had set his heart upon and longed for so earnestly.

Finally the wedding day arrived, and there was bustle and confusion about the room in which Mrs. Scratcher had lived so long. She was packing everything she possessed in a big trunk, with the exception of her wedding fixings and a plain gray traveling suit.

And she went at it with firm set lips, as she did about everything in which she meant business. In fact, Mrs. Jumper seemed much more exercised and excited than did her mother.

Finally it became so "warm" that Mrs. Jumper could stand it no longer without a steam fan, and she gradually approached her husband.

In this wise:

"Skidmore," this from her.

"Yes, my love," this from Jumper.

"You know it is not right that there should be any secrets between man and wife?"

"Certainly. Who thought of there being any?"

"Well, certainly. But, Skidmore, there is something you ought to know."

"I dare say."

"Something pertaining to our family."

"You don't say so?"

"Yes. Mother!"

"My mother-in-law? What of her?"

"Skidmore, we are about to lose her."

"Lose her! You don't say so?"

"Yes, she is——"

"Yes, I always knew she was."

"Hush, Skidmore! She is about to get married!" said Mrs. Jumper, with suppressed energy.

"Hush!"

"Fact!"

"When?"

"This day."

"Is it possible? To whom?"

"A working member."

"Of what?"

"Our church."

"Can it be?"

"Verily."

"His name?"

"Budd."

"What, Deacon Budd?"

"The same. Give thanks."

"I do, with all my heart."

"The deacon is rich,"

"Well, I have heard so."

"And you?"

"I shall be happy beyond a doubt."

Thus they came to understand each other.

The day of the nuptial festivities had actually arrived.

A gay company occupied the church, all waiting anxiously for the great event.

Finally it came.

Those who had known the Widow Scratcher before this epoch would have been puzzled to make her out now, so greatly changed was she under the attentions of her dressmaker and hairdresser.

Mr. Jumper was there, and even he was paralyzed, for he had never known the old angel to look so beautiful before. In fact, she seemed almost as young as did her daughter when he led her to the altar.

Gossip was out with all her wings and plumage on, and the people dwelling in the house of Jumper kept the ball rolling.

Nearly every one of the tenants was there to witness the matrimonial show, and to make sure that they were not being deceived, and that the old darling who had afforded them so much pleasure, was really on the point of leaving them.

Even Mary O'Callahan was there, seated in the gallery of the church, together with some of the other servants for whom Mrs. Scratcher had frequently made it so extremely pleasant.

"Begorra, but there she comes!" exclaimed Mary, as the organist struck up the Wedding March. "Luck at the ould hin wid her new feathers on," she added, laughing.

"Troth, there's wan happy man here," suggested Mrs. Cutter's servant.

"Who?"

"Our Landlord."

"Be jabbers, yees may bet yer ould shoes av that. But spakin' av ould shoes, do ye moind that?" asked Mary, unrolling a package and displaying an old shoe.

"What's that for?"

"Ter throw afther them, sure, when they leave ther church, an', moind me, I'll bet that I hit the ould gal wid it, just for ter give her good luck."

This idea pleased the group of servants exceedingly, but their attention was now called to the actors in the drama in the body of the church.

Mr. Jumper was there, looking as happy as a boy with a pocket full of marbles, and to tell the truth, his wife did not look as though she took the separation very much to heart.

He was to "give the bride away," and the reader who has followed the fortunes of "Our Landlord" from first to last can readily understand why he looked so happy at the performance of the duty.

When the minister asked:

"Who gives away the bride?" Mr. Jumper went blushing but smilingly to the front, and announced himself as the candidate for that particular honor, and we know that he never gave away anything in his life with so much pleasure.

Then the marriage ceremony proceeded until the meshes were effectually drawn around them both, after which the parson turned them adrift with his blessing—to settle the balance of power between themselves.

Dozens of the church members crowded around the newly-made and offered them congratulations, while the organist was trying evidently to burst the windpipe of his big musical machine.

Congratulations over, the music again changed to a wedding march, and the happy couple started down the aisle toward the door, near which the carriage was in waiting that was to take them back to the house for a change of clothing, and a final tearful farewell, after which it was to carry them to the depot for the commencement of their honeymoon tour.

The entry and aisles were so crowded that Mary could not throw her old shoe at them without hitting somebody else, in which case it would not be regarded as good luck at all.

She walked around to an open window in the gallery overlooking the carriage, reaching it just as they reached the carriage.

"Now then, here's luck!" said she, hurling the shoe at them.

It struck the deacon on his bald head, and caromed on the long nose of his new wife, causing her to utter a wild exclamation, and to grab the aforesaid nose.

"Ah, good luck—good luck!" shouted several, who recognized the object and intention of throwing an old shoe after a bride and groom.

But Deacon Budd couldn't see it, neither could Mrs. Deacon Budd, and amid the laughter and cries of "good luck," he covered his bald head, and assisted his wife into the carriage, which duly drove away, followed by that of Mr. and Mrs. Jumper.

The moment she threw the shoe Mary darted back out of sight, and hastened down the gallery stairs to join the waiting throng, so no one but her particular friends knew who it was that made the "lucky" carom.

But it was a terrible cross for Mrs. Budd to bear, and not speak her mind just as she wanted to, although she thought she had better abstain and manifest a little Christian fortitude for the present.

In an hour from that time they were on board a train of cars, bound for Niagara Falls, and the troubles of "Our Landlord" were over, for without her there was never a word or thought of hard feelings or wrangles of any kind in his family.

"But I shall be so lonesome, Skidmore," said his wife, after all was over.

"Yes, so shall I," said he, with a sigh.

"No, but I really mean it."

"So do I, and I think I shall have to get a mad dog in the house to taper off with."

"Oh, Skidmore, you are too hard on her. She isn't the worst person in the world," said his wife, coaxingly.

"No? Well, I hope not, and perhaps she is not. But if that is true, then I must be."

"Why so?"

"Because there have been evidences of a very bad person in our house ever since we have been married. But let it all pass now—let it pass and be forgotten. It is certainly a fortunate thing for me, and I think I can brace up on account of my loneliness exceedingly well, and in connection with the case, I cannot but quote the hymn:

"Behind a frowning Providence
He hides a smiling face."

This he uttered fervently.

"Oh, you are too cruel, Skidmore!"

"Well, forgive me if I am. I fancy there is something rather mean in my disposition."

"Mean! wherefore?"

"Because I have had several transactions with Deacon Budd, and he shaved me unmercifully."

"Well?"

"I am glad he is married, for it shows me that there is a grand law of compensation in this world—that the mills of the gods grind slowly, but they grind exceedingly fine; also that there are more ways of killing a cat than choking it to death with butter; also that a man can get even with his enemies if he waits patiently. But

there, say no more about it. Let us hope that everything will be lovely in our home hereafter," said he, with feeling.

"Amen!"

"Ah! here comes Bella!" said he, as his pretty niece came into the room smiling.

"I congratulate you, aunty," said she, at the same time casting a look at her uncle which was eloquent with the same feeling.

"Thank you, my dear," said Mrs. Jumper, rather quietly. "But I shall miss her so much."

"Oh, no, you will not, for now Bella will live with us and be your companion."

"And I trust we shall love each other, aunty, very much," said the girl, kissing her.

"I trust so."

"Oh, we shall get along famously, I know we shall."

"But I have another little surprise for you, my dear. I have ordered a grand supper for this evening, with music and all the fixings, in which the tenants on the various floors up-stairs will participate, and we will end the day's triumphs and happiness in royal style."

"Oh, that will be glorious!" exclaimed Bella.

But Mrs. Jumper made no reply, and looked a trifle sober, for she detected under all this a disposition on the part of everybody who had ever come in contact with her mother to rejoice at her exit, and to celebrate the event with hilarity.

But the supper came off all the same, and the tenants of the house had a glorious good time, not one of whom failed to participate.

Even Mary and the other servants had a "shindy" in the kitchen, and both above and below stairs the festivities were kept up till midnight.

After they had all returned to their respective flats, Mr. Jumper went out upon the veranda to enjoy the moonlight and a cigar, where he was soon after joined by his wife and niece. Even the cat perched herself upon the railing, as though to partake of the new quietude, the whole forming a domestic picture of peace which harmonized with the expression upon Mr. Jumper's face.

As the principal figure in this picture, let us, with many kind wishes for the future, take leave of OUR LANDLORD and the other characters who have figured in "Life in French Flats."

[THE END.]

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